

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE TALE OF AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE.

IN SIX WEEKLY PORTIONS. FOURTH PORTION.
CHAPTER VIII.

"I NEVER saw a piece of knitting in such a mess in all my life! What *were* you thinking of, Madge?"

Aunt Gough uttered this mild pleasantry in the fulness of her satisfaction, some days after that happy evening on which Horace had told me that he loved me. They all knew it now. Dear uncle had kissed and blessed me, mingling with his tender words some prudent cautions as to the necessity of waiting, and as to our youth and inexperience. But he was pleased. I knew that, and the knowledge made me inexpressibly happy. As for waiting, that was not hard to my mind. Of course we were young. Of course we were inexperienced, and without settled prospects in the world. But we loved each other, and our love was approved by those whom we most honoured and regarded. Surely that was happiness enough, to fill years of waiting, should years be necessary. Horace was not quite so contented to accept Uncle Gough's words of wisdom. He chafed a little, in his impetuous way, at being told of his youth and inexperience.

"Young!" he said to me, when we were walking alone together. "Does your uncle know that I am turned three-and-twenty?" Horace looked very solemn as he announced his attainment of this venerable age. "If he had said that I'm not good enough, there might have been some reason in it. But if my dear girl is content to take me only because I love her better than all the world beside——"

"No; because I love *you*, Horace."

"My own Margaret! If you are content, angel that you are, I don't see who need object."

"Dear Horace, be reasonable. Can anything be more kind and generous than Uncle Gough's behaviour? Of course he is right when he says that our youth——"

"There it is. Our youth! The fact is, fifty-five is getting to be thought the right age for love and marriage. I wish I was as old as De Beauguet. Upon my soul I do!"

"Perhaps, Horace, in that case the objection might come from *me*, and not from uncle."

"I always say absurd things when I'm angry," said Horace, wiping his eyes after an outbreak of laughter. "Everybody does."

I don't know whether everybody does, but I know Horace did. And what could be more absurd than the idea of his ever being fifty-five? My bright, impulsive Horace!

All this brings me back to Aunt Gough, and my tangled knitting. One of the servants had found it in the porch and taken it to my aunt, and she, divining the circumstances under which it had got into such a chaotic state, resolved to have her small joke at my expense. Horace and I were sitting with her now, having come in from the walk in which we had held the foregoing discussion as to the necessity for patient waiting.

"What *have* you been doing with your knitting?" said aunt. "I wonder who is expected to wear a stocking like that!"

"O, aunty, it was Horace. He was twisting it about in his fingers."

"And, pray, how came Horace to get hold of your knitting? I hope you don't mean to knit *his* stockings in that way, or he will think I have made but a poor housewife of you, after all my pains."

"Do give me a chance of testing her soon, Mrs. Gough," cried Horace, eagerly, improving the occasion. "We have been having quite a dispute, Margaret and I, and I am afraid Mr. Gough is all on her side. Do throw in your influence on mine. Do take my view of the case!"

Horace went over all his arguments to prove that we were both rather elderly, and to show that in three months, at the utmost, his prospects would be sufficiently assured to justify him in taking a wife. He was very eloquent in his pleadings. At least I thought so, and so, I suspect, did Aunt Gough. The truth is, Horace could be much more eloquent in speaking to her, than he could be in speaking to my uncle. I have said that Aunt Gough was highly sympathetic. And sympathy was to Horace the atmosphere in which he lived and breathed easily. There are strong militant natures to whom strife and the hope of victory are bracing and pleasant; but his was never one of them.

My aunt had been ailing ever since the visit to Meadow Leas. We could not trace any signs of positive disorder, but she got no stronger, had no appetite, and was incapable of active exertion.

This was the only cloud in our Heaven. This, and Anna.

My sister had been so variable and uncertain in her humour since that evening I have spoken of, when I spoke to her in her bed, as to try aunt sorely. Aunt's own temper was the sweetest and most placid in the world, but her nerves were unstrung, and she was liable to swoon on unusual excitement. Anna was not always angry, not always sullen, not always tearful, not always unaccountably gay and boisterous, but all these moods chased each other across her mind with startling rapidity. She was especially inconsistent towards Horace. At one time, she would be so sweet and sisterly to him as to make our hearts glad within us. Next moment, the merest trifle, the turning of a straw, something so slight as to be imperceptible to us, would ruffle her, and she would chafe and frown and treat him with an arrogant scorn that wounded me beyond measure. Once, I was angered out of patience, and spoke to her sharply, in Horace's presence. To my surprise, she was soft and humble in a moment, coming and kneeling by me with her face hidden in my lap.

"Margaret, I love you!" she said, in so low a voice that I, with my head bent down to hers, could hardly hear it.

"My dear love, I know you do. But, Anna, because you love me, you should be good to Horace." The dark clustering curls on my knee shook themselves petulantly from side to side. "Yes, Anna. I am sure he is very good to you. And you know he is to be your brother. Come! Give him your hand and be friends." With her face still hidden, she suffered me to take her cold little fingers, and put them into Horace's outstretched palm; and so there was peace again for a time. But all this, as I have said, was trying to my aunt. Uncle Gough saw less of it than she did; but even he saw enough to distress him.

"I tell ye what, my bairn," he said to Anna, "a little change will do you good. I am thinking you're not quite well, Nanny. I shall pack you off to Meadow Leas for a week or two, and beg Farmer Gibson to feed you entirely on strong ale and rabbit pasty. You're growing as slender as a hazel-wand, my bonny bairnie."

"I'm not a bit ill," returned Anna, decisively, "But I think I should like to go to Meadow Leas."

The idea was acceptable to us all. It had already occurred to me, that Anna's excessive irritability might be owing to incipient illness; and, indeed, she was looking worn and thin. So it was decided that she should go to Meadow Leas for a week or two.

I have not yet said anything as to the manner in which old Mr. Lee received the announcement of my engagement to his son. In truth, it is not a topic on which I am able to say much, for Horace would never exactly tell me what his father's words had been; but I gathered that he had expressed some disappointment in

the matter. It must have been on the score of my personal demerits, for I knew that an alliance with the family of James Gough of the Gable House was, in a social sense, the best he could have expected for his son. However, the old gentleman was all cordiality to my uncle, and all condescension to me. He treated me with elaborate, I may almost say oppressive, politeness—when he thought of it. Sometimes, however, he did not think of it. And I am afraid I liked those times best. He readily undertook to make the necessary arrangements for Anna's stay with the good people at Meadow Leas. But, before she went away, we had two pleasant surprises. One, was a letter from our dear friend in Canada; the other, which concerned Horace, I shall come to presently.

Dear little Madame de Beauguet wrote most cheerfully, and there was no mistaking the fact that she was a perfectly happy woman. They had not long arrived out when her letter had been written, but she had a great deal to say about her new home already, and about her "good-man."

"Do you remember your giving him that title?" she wrote. Her letter was addressed to my aunt. "I do. And nothing ever was more appropriate. Put the strongest possible accent on the first syllable, or on the second syllable, or on both syllables, and you will be perfectly right all ways. He is the best creature in the world. Am I not a fortunate woman?"

Then our old governess sent kind love to Philosophy and Will-o'-the-wisp; and made many inquiries about Horace:—"that most charming and civil of young civil engineers," as she called him. "Tell him that I have his parting flowers safely pressed in a book, and prize them above everything; and that my good-man says he hopes no young lady will be jealous when she hears it."

This set us wondering whether M'sieu' had discovered Horace's secret—*our* secret—and then they all laughed, and we wandered off into happy foolish talk about ourselves. Madame de Beauguet's pleasant letter having been read and re-read and discussed in full family council with great relish, then Horace brought forth his news. And this was the second surprise.

"I have had a letter from Mr. Topps, of Birmingham, sir," he said, addressing my uncle.

"From Mr. Topps, eh? I didn't know you kept up any correspondence with Mr. Topps."

"No, not exactly correspondence; but this is a business letter."

There was a look of triumph in Horace's eyes as he handed it to my uncle: though he assumed a sober unconcerned manner, as who should say that to a man of his age and position, a business letter from Mr. Topps was an every-day kind of matter.

"Am I to read it?"

"If you please, sir."

"What is it, Horace?" I asked, eagerly. But he hushed me with a motion of his hand, and we all waited silently until my uncle had finished reading the letter.

"Well, my boy, I am very much pleased with this. Indeed I am." My uncle took off his spectacles, and held out his strong right hand to Horace, giving him a hearty grip. "It does you credit, and you may justly be proud of it."

"I *am* proud of it, sir," answered Horace, with ingenuous glee. "I am glad that you should see—that you should have this opportunity of convincing yourself—that is, I mean, that my prospects—"

"Yes, yes, I know. You are proud and glad that I should be made to understand on such excellent authority, what a trustworthy responsible rising gentleman I am to have for a nephew, and what a very slow old coach I must be to think it well for him to wait one single day, before taking all the cares of the world on his shoulders! That's it, isn't it, laddie?"

Horace coloured, but answered with a smile: "Well, you have put it in your own words, sir, but I suppose that *is* it."

"And now, mayn't we know something of this great business?" asked my aunt, from among the cushions in her arm-chair.

Then Uncle Gough, with Horace's full consent, told us what were the contents of Mr. Topps's letter. That distinguished engineer retained a kindly remembrance and a high opinion of his former pupil, and was willing to put a good thing in his way when the occasion presented itself. There were some new waterworks to be erected in a small northern town just on this side of the Scottish Border, and Mr. Topps had been applied to, to find some competent person to design and superintend their erection. He himself was much too "eminent and expensive," as Mr. Lee would have said, to be asked to undertake the business. But the chairman of the water-works company, being acquainted with the great Birmingham engineer, had written to ask his advice. "And my advice is, that they should employ you, Lee," wrote Mr. Topps in his letter. "I have every confidence in you, and, if you will undertake it, it may lead to better things."

Better things! What could be better? So I thought. But to Mr. Topps, from his eminence, probably the whole matter looked small enough.

"What does Rotherwood say to it?" asked my uncle.

"Well, sir, he sees no objection to my taking it. Clinch, his artiedled pupil, can do all such work as I have been doing during the last half year."

The only drawback to our happiness was, that Horace would have to go to the north, and remain there some time. But that would not be just yet. Some six months must elapse before the arrangements could be so far advanced as to necessitate his presence. And six months seemed quite a long time to look forward to, when I was nineteen.

CHAPTER IX.

I WAS once told, when I was a very little girl—too little to be told so—that I should find good and evil, joy and sorrow, succeed each

other throughout my life, with the regularity of the chequers on a chess-board. I have found this true in the main: true in the sense in which it was intended to be understood: but I have never found it to be an accurate illustration of the alternations of bright and dark in our daily existence. The dark spots have come to me—and, thank God! the bright spots too—but by no means with the rigidity of outline and regularity of succession, suggested by the chess-board simile. Absolute blackness has been rare—rarer, perhaps, on the whole than absolute whiteness. I have known both. But they were divided from each other by infinite gradations of more or less neutral tints, and not by sharp well-defined lines, where the black ceased and the white began. In truth, I think that sharp well-defined lines are not common, either in nature or human nature.

I am led to remember the "chess-board," by thinking of the cloud that came over us soon after our pride and triumph in Horace's good fortune. Dear Aunt Gough grew very ill. Still without any special disorder that could be discovered, or that the family doctor chose to define to us; but very weak, and very ill. She seldom left her chamber now, and Anna being away, I was with her a great deal. She would sometimes feebly protest against the constancy of my attendance on her; but I said, and said truly, that I could not have been happy if I had left her to receive loving care from other hands.

"It is but selfishness after all, dear aunt; for, as soon as I am away from you, I begin to fidget, and to fancy that something has been forgotten which ought to have been remembered, or something left undone which ought to have been done. And then my self-conceit brings me back to see to things myself."

"But Horace will think *me* very selfish, my love, if I engross you altogether. That must not be."

"I am sure he will not think that, aunt. Besides, Horace has been away a good deal, himself, lately."

It was true that Horace had been away a good deal lately; away from Willborough. Before he should take his departure for the north, there were two or three matters to which Mr. Rotherwood wished him to give his personal superintendence. Among others, there was the draining of Meadow Leas. I have said that Mr. Rotherwood desired it, but Mr. Lee was very anxious, too, that Horace should see to it himself. Had not Sir Robert sent for him to the Hall purposely to speak of it? Had he not shaken hands with him, and presented him to my lady in the drawing-room? "Clinch could do it all right enough," said Horace. But nevertheless, thus influenced, he went himself to Meadow Leas. So it followed that what with his frequent absence, and what with my attendance on my aunt, we were not quite so much together as would otherwise have been natural in our position. But he rode over from his father's house (where he was staying to be near his work) almost every day, and brought my aunt many a

beautiful gift of fruit and flowers from the green-houses at the Hall. Horticulture had not then advanced to the rank of a fine art, but Mr. McGee, Sir Robert's Scotch gardener, had some pretensions to science notwithstanding, and I can bear testimony to the perfume of his roses, and their beauties of form, colour, and size. These floral offerings gave great offence to Stock, who lost no opportunity of decrying Mr. McGee's professional skill with much bitterness.

One evening my aunt had fallen into a doze, having desired, before she composed herself to rest, that I would go out and get a breath of air. So, after stationing one of the maids in the room with injunctions to call me when my aunt should awake, I went down-stairs and passed through the kitchen, in order to reach the garden by the back way. The servants were enjoying the pleasant evening hour, after the business of the day, and the maids were sewing and gossiping over their work. Stock sat near the open window, in an appropriately hard Windsor chair, with his pipe in his mouth, contemplating the glories of the kitchen garden. I never passed Stock without a few words of greeting. I had a knowledge—how acquired, it would be hard to say, for never by word nor look was he apt to show any touch of tenderness—that the old man had a soft corner in his heart for my sister and me.

"Stock, how well your early vegetables are looking!"

"I'm not sure as you knows much about it, Miss Margrit."

"I hope I know a little, Stock, a very little."

"Vara little," said Stock.

"The peas, for instance. Are they not unusually promising?"

"There's a Providence above all peas," returned Stock, "and equally above banes. An' it's fort'nate as there be."

Stock had not the least idea of being irreverent. But he was given to solemn-sounding phraseology, and believed, I fancy, that there was something vaguely meritorious in the use of pious words—words not especially applicable to the matter in hand, but which seemed of themselves to impart an odour of sanctity to his discourse, be it what it might. Stock was an ignorant narrow-minded old man, no doubt. But I have since heard pious talk, conducted on much the same principle, by people with the means of knowing better.

"It's fort'nate as there be, or it's little peas nor yet banes, as the master 'ud have see'd on table this year. Bill Green, he done his best to ruin of 'em; but there's a Providence beyond Bill Green."

It was so well understood by this time that Stock's revilings of his subordinate were to be taken as mere figures of speech, expressing more his own consciousness of old age and rheumatism than anything else, that no one uplifted a voice in defence of Bill Green: who, by the way, was as honest and hard-working a lad as could be found.

"I'm going into the garden, Stock," said I,

"to get a fresh posy for my aunt." This was an indiscreet speech.

"Ah!" growled Stock, "the missus she don't want no posies out of this here garden. Not now, she don't."

"O yes, she does, Stock. She thinks no flowers so sweet as our own."

"No more there bain't. None. The missus is right there, Miss Margrit. I knows summat about flowers, or I ought to it, and I'll 'fy all England to grow sweeter flowers nor urn. But it ain't sweetness now, nor yet completeness, as is the hobject wif some. It's to have 'em wallopin' big uns. That's the hobject. You grow your flowers wallopers, an' you'll do."

"I don't think that, Stock."

"Well, Miss Margrit, I ain't a goin' to try it, whether or no. I allus done my dooty, and I allus means to. I say as them flowers as young Master Lee brings here is wallopers, and nothin' else but wallopers. And I say, as one o' the 'lect, that I shan't find no wallopers where I'm a goin' to. Me—and a few more—we shan't be called upon to keep company with wallopers."

"Mr. Lee only meant to give my aunt pleasure, Stock. I'm sure he always admires the gardens at the Gable House. And you must not say anything unkind of Mr. Lee, Stock, because I love him very much, and I'm going to be married to him, you know."

"Ah, sure. Well, well, well. No, I han't got nothin' to say agin' young Mr. Lee. Goin' to be married," he pursued, musingly. "Little Miss Margrit. Ah, sure! Well, my dear, may the Lord have marcy upon ye!"

This was not exactly encouraging. But I understood Stock; and though his deep-set black eyes looked stern, and no muscle of his hard brown face was softened, yet I knew that the old man had a tender place in his heart for the orphan girl he had known so many years. I passed on to the garden, and was busy gathering my nosegay, when I heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs entering the stable-yard, and almost at the same moment a window in my room was softly opened, and Hester, the maid, called to me that my aunt was awake, and that Dr. Dixon was with her. "I will come in a few minutes, Hester, before the doctor goes." As she turned away, and shut the window, Horace came hurrying across the lawn, all booted and spurred from his ride.

"My dearest Margaret! I am so glad to find you here! Each time I have come lately, you have been mewed up in a close chamber."

"Dear Horace, I am very well. It does me no harm."

"It does me harm, for I see so little of you. And how is Mrs. Gough?"

"Dr. Dixon is with her now, and I am going in, to hear his report."

"Going in! It seems to me, Margaret, that you grudge every moment you give to me." He had drawn my arm through his, and we were slowly pacing down the garden walk; I, with my basket of freshly gathered flowers in my hand.

"O, my dear Horace!"

"Well, it does seem so. Of course it is right that you should be kind and attentive to your aunt. I am sure I am nearly as fond of her as you are. But you seem so indifferent, Margaret. As if you didn't care to be with me!"

His tone was petulant, irritable, and unlike himself; looking at him more closely, I saw that he seemed harassed, and was very pale, now that the flush of exercise had faded from his face.

"O, Horace!"

If I could have told him but a tenth part of the joy it gave me to be with him! But no, I could not. And yet the tone of his voice, the sound of his footfall, the glance of his eye, made my heart overflow with happiness. And surely he might have known this. If he did not, I could not make him know it by any words of protestation. I have said that it was my weakness to be too keenly sensitive to reproof, especially where my affections were concerned. I always saw that *other side* of things too plainly. What he thought and felt, was almost as vividly within my perception as were my own thoughts and feelings; but though I knew he was wrong, I could not plead my cause. It would have been better to have spoken frankly and fearlessly, setting forth the strength of my love; it would have been better, even, to have grown angry, and flamed at him as my sister might have done. But I could only withdraw into myself and bear my hurt in silence.

We walked to the end of the path without speaking, and, when we turned to go back towards the house, he suddenly took me in his arms, upsetting the flower-basket and scattering its contents upon the gravel. "No, my darling!" he said. "Don't mind me. I don't believe it."

"Believe what, Horace?"

"That you are anything but the sweetest, dearest, truest, most unselfish girl in the world."

"I am not that, Horace; but do me justice. At least I am not indifferent."

"No, no, no, my own love. I am sure you are not. Forgive me."

We kissed each other with wet cheeks, like two children, as we were.

"Look at my poor flowers, you bad boy. There! Put them all in the basket. I would not have old Stock see one blossom lying trampled on the ground, for more than I can tell. I must not keep Dr. Dixon any longer. You will come to aunt's room when she sends for you, and tell us all about Anna? Of course you see her constantly?"

"Yes; I—have seen her. *Must* you go now?"

I only shook my head in answer, and ran into the house. Uncle Gough was in my aunt's room when I reached it, and Dr. Dixon. The doctor was a mild middle-aged man, well known and much respected in Willborough. He was brother of that Mr. Dixon, the organist, of whom I said in my childhood that he "played so kindly."

"Good evening, Miss Sedley." The doctor stretched out his right hand, which held a leather driving-glove. I had never seen Dr. Dixon with that glove on, in my life, but he always carried it.

"How do you find my aunt, sir?"

"Mrs. Gough is better, decidedly better. If we can get a little strength, a little tone, we shall do very well."

"I am so glad!"

"Yes; a little tone. Do you know what I have been proposing to your uncle, Miss Sedley?"

"Proposing! Nay, it's all fixed and settled, lassie," put in my uncle, who was sitting by his wife's chair, gently smoothing her frail hand with his broad heavy one.

"I have been proposing," continued the doctor, who had a mildly obstinate way of sticking to his own form of words, "that Mrs. Gough should go for some months to the sea-side. To get tone; a little tone, you know."

"I believe it would do her great good, Dr. Dixon."

"Yes, yes; that's the thing, Madge," said my uncle. "She shall go, next week, to Beachington. I wonder we didn't think of it before."

"It wouldn't have done before, my good friend," said Dr. Dixon. "It is early in the season even yet. But I have been proposing something else, Miss Sedley."

"No, no," interrupted my aunt, faintly. "I won't allow it."

"Pardon me, my dear madam. I have also been proposing, Miss Sedley, that you should accompany her."

Accompany her! Go away from Horace during the short time he had yet to stay in Willborough! I felt ashamed of my selfishness even as I thought this.

"Of course I will go with her, Dr. Dixon, if she will let me."

"It is too bad to ask the dear child," said Aunt Gough. My uncle looked at me wistfully. "I'm loth to part the bairn from her sweet-heart," said he. "But yet I know she'd wish to do whatever she could for her good aunt. She's the best lassie in the world, doctor."

"My kind darling uncle," said I, "pray, pray, don't speak in that way, as if you were asking any favour of me. I am thankful and rejoiced to be of use."

"Of the very greatest use, Miss Sedley," said Dr. Dixon, taking up his hat. "You are very patient, very gentle, and very pleasant to look at—three inestimable qualities in a nurse." And with those words, the doctor betook himself down-stairs.

"Bless thee, my bairn," said my uncle.

"Horace will never forgive me," said my aunt; "but he'll have Madge to himself all his life, and perhaps I may not be here to trouble him much longer."

CHAPTER X.

SEA and sky, sky and sea, sea and sky! Deep blue, or pale green, livid under the clouds, dazzling in the sunshine, sleeping with a slow

long-drawn respiration beneath the moonlight, dashing yeasty foam mast high over slanting sails reddened by the dawn; beautiful, terrible, wonderful always; the great waters lay stretched out before my eyes for many, many weeks. From my chamber window at Beachington, I looked forth upon them, every night and morning. There was nothing to interrupt my gaze, as I strained it to the far horizon. I have stood looking, looking, looking, until all the life within me seemed to concentrate itself in my eyes, and I felt as though I were floating poised like a seagull in mid-air, with the fathomless heavens above me, and the fathomless ocean beneath me. O, sea and sky! O, sky and sea! O, the small throbbing human heart within, and the vast heaving waves without! O, the old, old story!

My aunt had borne the journey from Willborough—it was not a long one—better than we had thought she would; and, for the first fortnight of our stay at Beachington, her improvement was most rapid and encouraging. After that, she sank again a little; but they told us these fluctuations were to be expected, and we were hopeful. My uncle remained at the Gable House. He had come with us to Beachington, and had seen us settled in our new abode; then, he returned to Willborough; and Anna came back from Meadow Leas and kept house for him. I had left home with a heavy heart—heavier than the mere temporary separation from Horace should have made it; for he had parted from me almost in anger. I cannot say that he absolutely thought I ought to have refused to accompany my aunt, but he seemed to think that I ought to have made it very evident how much the going cost me. And how could I do that, without wounding my beloved benefactors!

"Horace," I said, "think, pray think, what they have been to us two sisters. It seems to me that an almost more scrupulous performance of loving duty is due from Anna and me to them, than if they were our parents."

"Duty! Yes; duty is your god, Margaret. You will weigh out the affection you owe, even to the last scruple, in the scale of duty. So much for my aunt; so much for my uncle; so many drachms for Horace; good measure for Horace; he is to be my husband. Margaret, if you knew what real love was, you could not be so calm and cold at parting."

I assigned what excuses I could for him, but I came away with a heavy heart. His first letters, after my departure, made me sweet amends. They were so full of love and sympathy, of kindly inquiries for my aunt, and affectionate solicitude for me, that I resolved to be happy again. My aunt, too, was apparently gaining strength, so the first days of our stay at Beachington were bright. We had brought a letter from Dr. Dixon to a brother practitioner at Beachington, one Mr. Bertram Norcliffe. This gentleman, besides being skilful in his profession, was an accomplished scholar, renowned for his acquaint-

ance with Greek and Latin and the modern tongues. When Dr. Dixon told us about him before we left home, we declared we should be frightened to speak to so awful a personage. But we found ourselves quite able to speak to him, and we soon came to like him very much. He was not young—nearly as old as Dr. Dixon, I dare say; but he was unmarried, and lived alone in a beautiful house some three miles inland from Beachington. He took an interest in my aunt's case, and, as he said it was essential that she should be kept cheerful and amused, he would come and sit with us, evening after evening, talking so unaffectedly and pleasantly that we entirely forgot all about his learning.

Of course we mentioned Mr. Norcliffe frequently, in our letters home. At least, aunt did, when she was able to write; and she generally added a few lines with her own hand to my weekly report to my uncle. In those times, the postman was not so frequent an apparition at everybody's door as he is now. A letter was a serious matter, either to send or receive. And, besides, between us and Willborough there was an awkward cross-country post, so that I seldom despatched a packet to the Gable House oftener than once a week. Horace's movements were very uncertain, as he flitted about between Willborough and Meadow Leas and the Hall. He even made a flying visit to the north, to consult with the chairman of the water-works company, and to reconnoitre his ground; and he accomplished the double journey thither and back again, and transacted his business, all within the space of five days. We thought this a very wonderful achievement. (I forget how few hours are requisite to do it in now.) As Horace seemed to have no settled abode, I generally sent my letters to him under cover to Uncle Gough or to Anna at the Gable House, and I frequently received his, through their hands, in the same way.

Gradually, by slow degrees—degrees it was as impossible for me to trace as the shifting hues of sunset on the western waves, which began with rosy lustre, and left the deep waters dark—I found a change in my lover's letters. It seemed as if some spell were cast over him—as if a shadow had interposed itself between him and me—and at length one dreary fortnight passed, and he did not write at all. But I fought against the dread that lay coiled up coldly at the bottom of my heart, and I endeavoured to be cheerful. How good my aunt was! How patient, how unselfish! I have never seen recorded the story of a purer, sweeter life than Lucy Gough's. You, my godchild, are named after her. Hers was the large heart, which, cleaving strongly to its own, yet could embrace all suffering souls in a divine rapture of charity. As you go through life, you will meet devoted wives who grudge hard-earned fame and fortune to their husbands' peers; admiring sisters, who delight to jeer at their brothers' rivals in the race of life; doting mothers, who, wrapping their own little ones warmly in the soft

shelter of maternal love, will yet bring themselves to turn a cold stern front on the forlorn defenceless infancy that peeps in, shivering, from the hard outer world, at the bright flame burning on the hearth of home. But not of these was my aunt. Perhaps my own trouble taught me to understand and value her, better than I had ever done before. Sorrow comes to teach such lessons. The worst was, I could not quite keep it to myself. "Has Horace written this week? What does he say?" She would question me thus, and I could not always keep back tears, though I tried hard. Though I tried very hard.

It was now drawing near the time at which I understood Horace was to take his departure for the north—within a day or two, as I reckoned—and I was feverishly hoping for a letter. A packet had come from the Gable House one morning, directed in Anna's hand, and containing a long letter from my uncle, and a short note from Anna for my aunt. But nothing from Horace; not one word. There was an incomprehensible allusion to my indolence as a letter-writer, made by my uncle. "Madge is a good correspondent to me, my love," he said, writing to my aunt, "but urge her not to let us old folks engross all her pretty letters. I think Horace feels hurt." What did this mean? I could not understand it.

The day had been oppressively hot, and the moonless night came down from a brooding sultry sky. We sat with open windows, listening to the plash, plash, of the tide upon the shingle, and catching now and again, through the gathering darkness, the distant flash of some white-crested wave leaping high above its fellows. Mr. Noreliffe was with us, and we had all been sitting silent for some minutes.

"How the sea booms to-night!" I said. "Is it not a hollow, threatening noise?"

"Yes," he answered, "I know the sound well. We shall have a storm."

While he was yet speaking, rapid wheels and hoofs grated on the road beneath the windows, and a post-chaise stopped before the door.

I heard a voice telling the postilion to stop. "Why, it is uncle!"

I started up breathless.

"James!" cried my aunt, with a seared look, "what can have brought him here?"

"O, I know, I know!" I exclaimed, "Horace must be with him—he has come to say good-bye, he has come to see me before he goes!"

I was rushing to the room door, when it opened, and my uncle stood before me, alone. I know not what wild thoughts whirled through my brain. I turned giddy. I saw his pale rigid face, and my heart stood still.

"Horace!" I gasped out. "He is dead!"

"My bairn! My bairn!"

"He is dead, and you have kept me from him!" My own voice sounded hoarse and strange in my own ears.

"Margaret! My beloved child! Be strong, be brave."

"Tell me the truth. He is mine. I have a right to know. Is he dead?"

I clutched my uncle's arm. At the touch of my hand, his locked mouth broke from its fixed lines, with the terrible convulsion that comes upon a strong man when he weeps.

"No, Margaret, he is not dead. But he is gone—fled—fled away with Anna—and he is a damned black villain!"

The boom of the sea grew into a great roar, thick darkness came over me, and I fell down senseless.

ICE-BOUND IN ARKANSAS.

A QUARTER of a century ago a D.D. of Harvard College left Boston, Massachusetts, on a professional tour of inspection to the Indian territory lying to the north of Texas. The journey of about two thousand miles was made with the average number of delays, in the way of boiler explosions and break-downs. The doctor spent five months in passing from wigwam to wigwam, helped by a young Cherokee, whom, together with an Indian boy (not Titania's), he took with him in the month of February on the eastward journey back to Boston. Travel was not in those days very easy; but the presence of a wise man from the East was an event in the Cherokee world; and, on his return, the benevolent Bostonian was charged with the escort of somebody's wife and family to the Mississippi, and of somebody else's two daughters all the way to Boston, where they were to have their education finished.

Well, they set out, and in a week got to Van Buren: a small town near the western border of Arkansas, and a few miles below Fort Smith on the Arkansas River. Thence they meant to go by water across the State. But at Van Buren the doctor learned, to his dismay, that, owing to the low state of the river, navigation had been suspended for eight months. Until the breaking up of the frost in the cold upper regions of the Arkansas River and its long tributaries, there could be no boat-communication with the Mississippi. The detention of his caravan caused great concern to the excellent D.D. Arkansas was the resort for the lawless and the abandoned. Its inhabitants, hardier than their more southern neighbours, the Texans, had all their reckless daring, without their refining influences. Moreover, the little town of Van Buren was specially favoured by a horde of border ruffians, whom the doctor, with his Indian boy, his Cherokee, and his two commission groups of girls, thought to escape by establishing himself and them in a farm-house a few miles from the town.

This farm-house might be taken as a sample of the planters' dwellings in that region. It was built of rough logs, and was divided into two compartments, in which the whole family cooked, and lived, and slept. In those days many such farmers or "planters" in Arkansas, possessing eighty or a hundred slaves, lived contentedly thus housed, and passed their lives in smoking, drinking, gambling,

hunting; while their wives and daughters sat in lazy ignorance, despising occupation as fit only for negroes, and having no higher ambition than to get the gaudiest show of trumpery in all the State upon their backs.

In such a family the doctor and his young friends were desired to make themselves at home; the farmer encouraging them with the usual declaration that he had plenty of "hog and hominy" to give them. It was agreed that all the ladies and children should occupy one room, and that the host, the parson, and the boys should live in the other.

These points were settled, and the united families were at supper, when a party of eight or ten men trooped into the house. These were already in possession of quarters. They occupied a sort of loft under the roof, the way to which was by a ladder through a hole in the rough plank ceiling of the lower rooms. The men of this party professed to be traders—chiefly in horses, but also in furs, skins, and general barter—with the Indians. A more daring, cut-throat, rough-and-ready set of men the discomfited D.D. had never seen together. Their leader was almost a dwarf; his legs were bent, and he carried his crooked arms with the elbows out, the shoulders humped, and his head buried between them. He squinted, and the sedate doctor never knew towards whom his evil glances were directed. He had a villainous look, and carried a long sharp butchery-sort of compound dagger, knife, and pike. It was a recreation of his to draw this instrument from its sheath and brandish it with a swagger, as if to warn off spies and intruders. Divers kinds of fire-arms were secured in his belt, and he seemed to carry a deadly instrument in every pocket: to load or sharpen some of which was the occupation of his quiet moments. Among his companions were men of various ages and sizes, all powerfully armed, to not one of whom did the doctor feel disposed to volunteer a remark. This repulsive set, nevertheless, watched their leader's face, and adapted themselves to him with that submission which is always yielded to a strong will. Their conversation soon convinced him that he had not gained much by avoiding Van Buren. On behalf of the young girls under his charge, he was uncertain what to do; but he resolved to keep unobtrusive watch over the movements of these gentlemen without appearing to do so, and to be very cautious in his behaviour. Exclusiveness was impossible. The host, himself a coarse rough man, recognised no distinction in his guests.

The dwarf and his comrades in the loft drank and gamed nearly all that night. As the hours dragged on, their conversation became loud and offensive. Through the loose planks the doctor heard them shamelessly boasting of their evil deeds, heard them name travellers whom they had swindled, and the fresh victims for whom their bait was laid. He heard himself and his party talked over with calculating curiosity, the voices sometimes growing louder and sometimes sinking into a whisper.

Though a brave man, he quaked a little in his blanket. Want of light alone compelled them to put an end to their riotous game.

Next morning, to the D.D.'s relief, these men set off for town, where they remained all day, coming back only in time for supper; then, with a general understanding, they betook themselves to the further end of the long table upon which the supper was laid, and there they talked among themselves, wholly busy on their own affairs.

There was a small church within a few miles, where, on the Sabbath following, there was to be "preaching:" a rather rare event in those parts. "A very smart man" was "due," the doctor was informed. This smart man appeared to be very popular in the district—"quite an orator," the squire assured the learned Bostonian. Orator or not, and popular though he might be, it appeared that the greater novelty—in the person of a D.D. from enlightened Boston—proved the stronger attraction to the inhabitants; for, when it became known that Dr. B. was in the neighbourhood, a deputation arrived on the Sunday morning to ask him to preach for them. Dr. B. was unwilling to take precedence of the orator who had brought his ready rhetoric from a considerable distance, so he only proposed to go back with the deputation to the church. When he got there, and was introduced to the divine of the backwoods, he saw clearly that he would run more risk of offending if he preached, than if he didn't. Nevertheless, the host took his refusal almost as a personal affront, feeling himself responsible to the disappointed citizens. In the craving for excitement, all the "gentry" for miles around had crowded to this little church, in vehicles as rough as the building, and drawn by quadrupeds almost as rough as themselves. The church, a mere log-hut, was crowded, and, to the doctor's surprise, he saw the dwarf and two or three of his companions occupying a bench in the middle of the room so called. After the usual exercises, the orator stood up to preach, and immediately the dwarf and his friends got up from their bench, and, without any attempt to hush their movements, hustled each other out of the building.

"I say, parson," broke forth the dwarf, from his end of the long supper-table, that same evening: "that was a regular sell of yours. Warn't it now? That little shanty never trapped such a shiny crowd as you seen there to-day, I guess. All regularly sold. He! he! Pity the Boston scholar couldn't find a word to say to any of them, neither."

The doctor then discovered that it was in the expectation of hearing him preach, that these men had gone to the church. He was not a little puzzled to know how to take their half-angry threat: "We shan't forget that sell, you know, parson."

Nearly three weeks went by. The frost that year had been so sharp in the upper country, that, notwithstanding the advance of spring, there was as yet no change in the river near Arkansas.

One day the household were disturbed by a singular murmuring noise in the air. It was a sound as of a long train of carriages upon a distant railroad, or as the far-off roaring of the wind in a forest at the coming of a tempest. But railroads were hundreds of miles away; the air was calm, the weather was fine. The whirling rushing sound of immense flocks of migratory birds on wing is sometimes heard a long way off, but now no dark cloud of feathery flocks was seen approaching. While the strangers listened and wondered, this strange murmuring grew into a roar, as of distant thunder. The doctor was considering what possible force in nature, what disturbing influences, could produce so sudden and astonishing an uproar, when one of the negroes laid his ear to the earth.

"Yor!" he cried, with a self-important air, as he suddenly sprang to his feet again. "Dat ar come down de ribber."

"The ice has then broken up!" exclaimed the doctor, and turned towards the river.

Accustomed as the Boston traveller had been to witness the breaking up of the frost and its effects on mighty rivers, he had never known it to be attended by so overpowering a tumult. It was now like a coming Niagara, and was accompanied by tremulous vibrations of the ground. The doctor hurried on; the river was not far off; and he had barely reached its banks ere he beheld, rolling, pouring, tumbling, forward, in one solid wave, a perpendicular bank of waters, eighteen or twenty feet high. It was what one can imagine that wall of waters to have been, "on the right hand and on the left," through which the Israelites passed, excepting that this vast volume was moving onward between its wide banks with astounding force and speed—dark and dense with enormous blocks of ice, with crumbling masses of soil, with stems and roots of forest trees. The inhabitants had hardly time to contemplate this vast wave, ere it had gone by, leaving a murky, tumultuous torrent in its rear. Soon the ordinary rushing of the rapid river was all that was heard. In a few hours the wide high banks were full. In a few days the turbulent waters had calmed themselves into a navigable stream.

When the long-anticipated passage-boat arrived at Van Buren, so great was the eagerness of the concourse of travellers to secure berths, so crowded and heavily-laden was the steamer, that, for the comfort and safety of the girls under his charge, the doctor resolved to await a second steamer, and so to avoid the throng of impatient backwoods-men, and especially the company of his ruffianly fellow-lodgers, whose manners had become insufferably familiar.

At last the time came when he and his young friends might proceed merrily down the Arkansas River. All went smoothly enough during the first day's passage, but on the following morning, to their dismay, they beheld the obnoxious dwarf and his comrades, and the deck crowded with horses and mules for which they had been trafficking. They had come on board during

the night, at a small town where the boat had stopped, and with them a number of other passengers. There was no help for it. When the ungainly horse-dealer stepped boldly up to the D.D. and the young ladies, and, with a free and friendly air, held out his hand and cried, "Hullo, parson, how are ye?" all they could do was, again to make the best of it.

Traffic on the river having been suspended for so many months, it was to be expected that the stoppages were now frequent, the passengers in eager haste, and the steam on at high pressure. In that most reckless State of a reckless country, the danger was very great. At last, as Dr. B. had long anticipated, the boat struck violently upon a snag, careened, and stuck fast. The people and horses rolled, plunging and struggling across the deck. Many who could swim, leaped straightway into the river. To those who could not thus save themselves, death seemed inevitable; for even if the boilers escaped explosion, the boat must—every one thought—go down.

When the D.D. could extricate himself and recover his feet, he sought his young companions, assisting and consoling them as best he could. With all speed the cargo was being pitched overboard to lighten the boat, rickety skiffs were being lowered, and, amidst the utmost confusion, the strong hustled the weak in their efforts to crowd into them, thus seeming to risk more certain destruction than if they took their chance on deck. The doctor was a poor swimmer, and in the scramble he had hurt one of his arms.

In that moment of deliberation the young Cherokee pressed eagerly towards the doctor. He could swim—easily, swiftly, he said. He would bear first one and then another to the shore. Young Neosho also could swim skilfully. Let the mother trust a child to him, Let them both plunge into the river together, and, between them, all their friends might be rescued.

The doctor entreated the Indian youths not to take to the water till the latest moment. Meanwhile, he unloosed from his waist a leathern belt, in which was a considerable sum of gold. Should the coin drag him down to the bottom of the river, neither he nor it could benefit anybody, but if he could manage to fling it as far as the nearer bank, some survivor, or perchance some lucky emigrant, might find it, and turn it to good account. Wide as the river was, he could but make the attempt. Quick as the thought he doubled and redoubled the belt, and was tying it with his handkerchief to make the better throw, when the dwarf, who had watched his proceedings, pushed forward and confronted him. Even at such a moment, the doctor felt convinced that this man was about to demand the belt, and that he would not scruple to enforce his demand with one of those terrible weapons of his. Desirous that the robber should not have this additional crime on his conscience, the doctor handed it to him without a word.

"Ay, ay! that's right, parson. I know the worth of gold," cried the dwarf, jerking out his words with great rapidity, and laying his hand upon the treasure. "No, no; not *this* trash," shaking the belt—"this is the nugget I mean," pointing unpleasantly, and with a grim smile, at the doctor's left side. "I don't profess to be of much account myself; but I can tell them that is, as quick as most. That was a regular sell of yours, though, parson. Warn't it, now?"

With his ugly head on one side as he spoke, and with first one eye and then the other leering upon the amazed minister, his motions were as rapid and as jerky as his speech. He spun about on his crooked legs, and poked and patted with his crooked fingers, first at the belt and then at the owner, and brought his crooked arms into as many unexpected positions as a mountebank: which, indeed, he strongly resembled.

The Boston doctor involuntarily drew back a step or two, though still holding out the belt.

"Ha ha! Afraid of me, eh?" cried the man, with a scornful laugh, though a shadow, as of pain, shot across his face. "Lookee here, now, parson!" Seeing that the minister was at a loss to comprehend his intentions, he proceeded in the same eager and emphatic manner, in his uncouth phraseology, seasoned with coarse compliments, to assure the doctor that he had observed him closely during their acquaintance at the squire's, and that he had come to the conclusion that "the parson's life must be saved, anyhow." That for his part, he was used to these "smash-ups," and could take care of himself when the time came; but the D.D. could not, and therefore he was to lose no more time, but choose a horse, strap himself upon its back, and trust himself to be carried safe to land. "Keep your money, parson," he added; "a few hundred dollars ain't nothing to me. I'm a rich man, though I ain't much to look at."

What with the number of persons who were leaving the boat, and the quantity of cargo which was being pitched overboard, the steamer grew perceptibly lighter. The violence of the current was also helping gradually to shift it from the branches of the snag. While the astonished minister was thanking his strange well-wisher, and explaining that he had resolved not to separate himself from the helpless young persons relying on his protection, and while the dwarf was urging upon the doctor any number of horses, and further volunteering his advice and assistance, the boat suddenly righted. Some minutes elapsed before the crew could ascertain the precise nature of her injuries; but these, after a time, were found to be higher up the ship's side than her present water-line, and less serious than had been apprehended. The business of collecting the swimmers, recovering the sinking, readjusting the freight, and making cautiously for the next stopping-place, need not be here detailed, such descriptions being as common as the accident.

When some degree of order and of con-

fidence was restored, Dr. B. looked round for his singular friend, with the intention of expressing a more thorough acknowledgment of his generosity, and also with a feeling of awakened interest in the singular character, which, though boastfully reprobate, had displayed such unexpected disinterestedness. But it was some time before the doctor caught sight of his friend, and even then he failed to attract his attention. The man seemed to slink away, as if with an uneasy sense of having done something to be ashamed of; so the minister had to seek out even to waylay, his fellow-traveller.

"Ay, ay, parson!" said the dwarf, with a mixture of hurt pride and bashfulness, when at length the Bostonian succeeded in drawing him into conversation; "now you'll never believe I meant you should have them horses! But to prove it, you shall come and choose one—two, if you have a use for 'em. I ain't much to brag on myself, and I don't, as a general thing, put much faith in parsons; but when I meets with a parson as is the right sort, I'd like to serve him a good turn, and I don't want to have him think I ain't capable of doing such. I did reckon on hearing you speak a few words, though, parson, that time as I went up to that ere shanty, and it *was* a sell of your'n, parson. Warn't it, now?"

SIR ALAIN'S DOVE.

SIR ALAIN has a castle fair,
There all his ancestors were born,
And there he drew his earliest breath
Beside the blue Elorn.

Sir Alain there keeps feudal state,
Fair horses, hawks, and hounds has he,
And he is great and he is good
As ever a knight may be.

He has a broad and open brow,
A piercing dark-lash'd eye of blue;
About his ruddy mouth his beard
Grows thick of red-brown hue.

And thick about his comely face
His wavy locks fall all adown,
Here burnish'd with a sunbright tinge,
Here of a shady brown.

Six feet two does he stand erect,
Great of girth is his spreading chest;
It had need to be, for a greater heart
Can beat in no man's breast.

Further down, by the blue Elorn,
'Neath the Château of La Forêt
(La Forêt, that in days of old,
So do the legends say,

Was Tristram's castle of Joyeuse Garde,
Where with the beauteous Isulte he
Received the flower of Arthur's court,
The glory of chevalrie)—

'Neath the Château of La Forêt,
Spanning across a singing rill
That spills itself in the fair Elorn,
Stands a quiet little mill.

An only child the Miller has,
She looks a damsel of high degree,
White, and tender, and calm, and fair,
With prison'd sunbeams among the hair
That ripples unto her knee.

Jeanne has suitors, a dozen or more ;
Late and early they come to woo,
But cold is her eye, and cold her lip,
Unchanging her cheek's soft hue.

"Now, Jeanne, my daughter," the Miller says,
As he draws his child unto his knee,
"What is it turns thy heart away
From the best hearts offer'd thee ?

"What seekest thou, darling daughter of mine ?
What manner of man should thy husband be ?
Seekest thou learning, or beauty, or wealth,
Or seekest thou high degree ?

"Learning maketh the young man old,
Beauty's deceitful and fadeth fast,
Wealth I hold not in high esteem,
Though longer its joys may last ;

"And high degree, though it sits so fair
On the brows of those unto honour born,
Is not for us, the tillers of earth,
The growers and grinders of corn."

Jeanne look'd up in her father's face,
Sweet were her eyes and very meek,
"None of these things, my father dear,
Does thy darling daughter seek.

"Art thou weary, my father dear,
To have me sitting here by thy knee ?
Is the home where we both were born
Grown too narrow for thee and me ?

"If it be not so, O father mine,
And thou lovest the child my mother left
To be a link between her and thee
When of her thou wert bereft,

"Leave this talk that I hate to hear,
Bid these wooers in peace depart ;
They are nothing to me ; they can find no key
To open the door of my heart."

She has stolen along the wooded bank
By a path her footsteps alone have made ;
The roebuck only lifts his head
And looks at her unafraid :

The little birds in their secret nests
Never tremble to see her pass,
And the wood anemones nod and smile
Amid the lush green grass.

At length she reaches an ancient oak,
Gnarl'd, and knotted, and half decay'd
(Twas said that beneath that very oak
The wily serpent maid

Brought from the lake unto Arthur's court
By Arthur's guest, King Pellimore,
With glamour had won over Merlin sage,
To betray the hidden store

Of marvellous treasures, rich and rare,
Kept behind the enchanted stone,
Neath which she made the enchanter pass,
Then left him to die alone).

Lithe and active as squirrel she climbs,
Where wreathing boughs make a leafy nest,
And there she sits without motion or sound
Save the heaving of her breast.

For soon 'mid the parted brushwood comes
A footstep—well she knoweth the sound!—
And through the covert Sir Alain breaks
With his favourite hawk and hound.

All unknowing the maiden near,
He stretches his limbs on the grass so sweet,
The gentle bird on his finger rests,
The hound lies down at his feet.

Softly he strokes the gentle bird,
Softly the jealous hound draws nigh
For a touch of his master's hand, bestow'd
Between a smile and a sigh.

"Oh," then murmurs the Miller's maid,
And her cheek with a passionate pain grows pale,
"Must my heart starve with this hunger of love ?
Is my anguish of no avail ?

"O summer air that whispers around !
O flowers laden with odours sweet !
O little birds whose tender wings
Flutter about my retreat !

"Have ye no voices to murmur low—
Low in his ear what I must not breathe—
'Love, love, love, is around thee,
Here, in the forest, love hath found thee,
Love that is stronger than death ?'

"What am I saying, O master, mine ?
What is the love of thy slave to thee ?
Thou to care for a vaillein-maid
When no lady of thy degree

"Thou hast found worthy to share thy home,
Be the joy and love of thy life,
Noble, but nobler of all in this—
That she call'd herself thy wife.

"Could I be loved as that taméd hawk,
Even loved as the less-loved hound,
I were content to live and die
Couch'd at thy feet on the ground."

Little Sir Alain ever knows
What bird sits there on the great oak limb ;
Or, as he rises and wanders on,
Whose heart goes after him.

And now through all the Breton land
Goes a stir and a rumour of war,
And Bretons, turning from spade and plough,
Are arming near and far.

For Charles de Blois, the invader, comes,
Marching on in the power of might ;
Jean de Montfort stands his ground,
Sure of the power of right.

Sir Alain he leads a gallant band—
True men and brave as the land can boast,
Men with hearts, and hands, and nerves
To stand against a host.

Staunch to the call of liberty,
The sturdy Miller forsakes his mill ;
He grinds his broadsword instead of grain,
And the busy wheel stands still.

"Now God thee save, my darling child,
And keep thee safe till I come again."
She clung to his breast, and no word she spake,
But the tears fell down like rain.

"Nay, my daughter, but weep not thus ;
Wouldst thou weaken thy father's heart ?
Wipe these tears and smile on me,
My darling, before we part !"

She wiped her tears, and she smiled on him.
 "Think no more, my father, of me;
 Follow Sir Alain, as still my prayers
 Will follow him and thee."

The host went forth to the battle-field,
 The maid remain'd in the still old house;
 She went not forth to the forest by day,
 Nor hid among the boughs.
 She shed no tear, she made no moan,
 She shunned the sun and the face of day;
 But when the moonbeams shone cold and white,
 And the screech-owl shriek'd through the solemn
 night,

Then she was up and away—
 Away to the banks of the blue Elorn,
 Away to the sleeping forest-glades,
 Up and down like a restless ghost
 Among the ghostly shades.

"For oh, I love him!" was all her cry,
 "Oh, I love him!"—below her breath.
 "He never could have been mine in life,
 But his life shall be mine in death."

"Here on this spot I saw him last,
 Here in the sunlight I saw him lie;
 And on this spot I'll lay me down,
 And in the moonlight die."

White 'neath the moon is the sweet dead face,
 Wet and cold lie the dew on her breast,
 Wild on the wind the wolf's howl comes,
 But nought disturbs her rest.

And in the morning a milk-white Dove
 Rises up from the clay-cold form,
 And wings its flight through the forest boughs,
 Through the sunshine bright and warm.

Straight to the battle-field it hies,
 Hovering high o'er the bloody strife,
 Where Breton hands and hearts strike true
 For liberty and life.

Sir Alain heads an onward charge,
 On like a thunder-bolt he rushes;
 A French lance strikes his stalwart breast,
 And out the hot blood gushes:

To and fro he sways—then prone
 The grand form like a tower tumbles;
 Still borne on by the force of the charge,
 O'er their leader each soldier stumbles.

They are past and gone: alone he lies,
 From his breast the life-blood welling;
 Surely the sound of an angel's wings
 There comes on the thick air swelling?

No, it is but a milk-white Dove;
 She settles down on the gaping wound,
 Pressing, pressing, her snowy breast
 On the bloody gash profound,

Pressing, pressing, her spotless breast
 Till the welling blood has ceased to flow
 (The feathers take not the crimson dyes).
 Sir Alain opens his death-dimmed eyes,
 And murmurs faint and low.

Slowly his senses come again,
 He sees the white Dove on his breast;
 He strokes it feebly, "Bird of peace,
 Strange is thy place of rest!"

Anon across the field there come
 The sturdy Miller and other three,
 "The blessed Virgin and Saint Mée!n!
 Behold the Saint-Esprit!"

The white Dove slowly lifts herself;
 They bind the wound and gently bear
 The knight to shelter, and still the Dove
 Hovers aloft in air.

They lay him down 'neath a gnarled oak,
 Like that which grew at La Forêt;
 The white Dove, like the Miller's maid,
 Sits up there all the day;

The livelong day and the livelong night,
 The while the Miller and his men
 With careful tendance bring their lord
 Back to the world again.

The fight is over, the battle won,
 Armorica once more is free,
 Sir Alain saved, and all again
 Is as 'twas wont to be.

But never more the milk-white Dove
 Was seen of any mortal eye,
 Since from the oak-bough she had sprung
 Up towards the summer sky.

HOUSE-HUNTING.

NEWLY called to the Bar, about to attend the Home Circuit, and on the point of marrying, I wanted a neat cottage (two sitting-rooms and, say, five bedrooms) about an hour's journey from London.

A love of good scenery made me select Berkshire or Surrey. I wanted (being an inexperienced dreamer) a little Paradise, semi-detached, with small Eden of flowers and vegetables, for forty pounds a year, exclusive of taxes—or inclusive, if I were lucky enough. Afraid of the dearthness of things in the charming and well-known villages on the Thames, I went to the chief London house-agents, Messrs. Tyler, Meddleham, and Trap, and obtained their lists of eligible houses. What a bright dream-land lay before me! I stood like Columbus on the edge of a boundless and golden continent—deer-parks, pineries, lakes, conservatories, butler's pantries, hard and soft water, loose boxes, coach-houses, grouse shooting over forty thousand acres, were all before me where to choose. I had only to dip my hand in the lucky bag and draw a prize.

That sour fellow Fungoid, at the Sarcophagus, had told me it was a most difficult thing to get a cheap cottage that was worth occupying, if the neighbourhood were a popular one. Stuff and spite of Fungoid's—all said to vex me and Lizzie. What did he know about it, with his legs always on a sofa at the Sarcophagus, dozing over a blue-book on the game laws? Large mansions might be hard to get; but the "cottage orny" (as the house-agent called it when expatiating to me) was quite another thing. Here they were on the lists by dozens. "Very elegant semi-detached villa residence, at Little Bookham—good fishing;" "Cottage, with six bedrooms—gas—good garden;" "Delightful residence, at Cheatham—five minutes from railway station." Plentiful, indeed! Is sand plentiful on the sea-shore? Are buds plentiful about the first of May?

As I am not much of a business man, my future mother-in-law insisted on writing me down a list of questions—a catechism for landlords. They were not complimentary to my judgment, but they were still essential, as Mrs. Masterman pitifully observed. They ran somewhat in this way:

“Rent?
Number of rooms?
If a store-room?
Mind the coal-cellar.
Ask what taxes.
Look at the gas.
Try the bells.
Feel all the walls.
Stamp on the floors to see if they are strong for dancing.
Make a note of the wall-papers.
Who are your neighbours?
Turn on the water.
Look at the kitchen grate.
Is the house dangerous for robbers? (Bad grammar, Mrs. Masterman.)
How long since occupied last?
When built?
If lumber-room?
Go on the roof.
Look down the chimneys.
See if the wine-cellar is damp.
Observe fastenings.
Measure all the rooms.
Ask rent of neighbouring houses.
Price of meat, poultry, and fish.
Price of wages?
Size of hall?
Number of stairs?
If main drainage?”

“Why, Mrs. Masterman,” I remarked, “it would take a surveyor a week, to answer all these questions.”

“Edward,” said that august and terrible personage, laying down her cards (we were playing whist at the time), “if you love Lizzie, and if you love me, you will not neglect a single question.”

The first house I went to was one at Perdle-ton—extraordinarily cheap—about twenty miles from Swindon and eighty from London. I started very early from London, dozed in the train, awoke in the fresh chilly air of early May, and found myself gliding on among the cold green fields of Berkshire, and not far from Perdleton.

We sprang through a tunnel, and were there. I asked the station-master if there were any house to be let in Perdleton?

“Well, sir,” said he, oracularly, “there was a week or two ago. Here, Jim” (he called a porter who was cleaning lamps), “Captain Jones is going to stay, after all, isn’t he, at Place Farm?”

“I think he is,” said the porter; “but Mr. Harvey will tell the gentleman. He’s the draper, sir, opposite the Berkshire Yeoman—every one knows him, he’ll know—straight up the hill, sir. Leave your bag, sir?”

Up the hill I went; a long dull hill, with a

villa here and there, and looking back, I had a broad distant sort of view of a fine valley and wooded hills. The scenery was featureless, but not restricted, and it might have been worse. I felt prepared to like it. I looked at “the houses, and the village church, and the cottage by the brook,” in that sort of friendly way that one does when making an acquaintance of a place that is to be one’s future home.

I found the main street narrow and dull, one, two, or three mean shops, several cottages, and two inns. I went first to the Berkshire Yeoman, and asked for Mr. Harvey. They pointed me out a dreary-looking shop opposite, with two pairs of boots and a red comforter in the window. Mr. Harvey was a hearty red-faced man, like a farmer. I asked for the house I had heard of at Perdleton. He proved to be its agent. “There it is!” said he, with a rueful look. He stood at the door of the shop, and pointed in a melancholy way to a cottage opposite; a long low-browed cottage, with a little green door, three stone steps, a small strip of turf, a low box-hedge, and a wall between it and the road. A more forlorn and sorrowful house I never saw, and my heart sank within me, until it leaped up again on learning that the annual rent was only twenty-five pounds.

A sudden courage seized me. I would see the house. Its cheapness attracted me. It had the best garden in Perdleton. A doctor had once lived in it. There might be good points; its inconveniences might surely be borne with for the sake of its cheapness. But why was it so cheap? Are good things ever cheap? Perhaps it was cheap, merely because it was old-fashioned, in a dull and forsaken part of a retired Berkshire village, and opposite labourers’ cottages. The door jarred open. What a place! A dark-stoned paved hall, the paper in a white efflorescence with damp, and here and there stripped off in large dark shreds. The rooms, with low oppressive ceilings that weighed down upon me like a nightmare, small and badly-lighted rooms looking out on the dreary road and the unchangeable box-hedge. The drawing-room—a gaunt chamber, rather lighter, and, in a solemn old-fashioned way, more cheerful—had a broad lattice-window looking out on a great square garden and a paved walk, some steps, and a dismantled little terrace, where the dry stalk of a last year’s sunflower shook its withered head disconsolately, as if grown idiotic with a long-continued pressure of misfortune. The garden only wanted rows of white tallies as tombstones to complete its identity with a cemetery. A huge dead pear-tree faced the bedroom window. Even in the cold spring sunshine and full daylight, I could fancy ghosts in trailing and rustling sacques, pacing along that doom-stricken terrace; faces in powder and patch looking through the latticed panes, little ghostly fellows in cocked-hats running out from the doors, or being chidden from the windows. The gable ends bore the date 1710, and every odd nook and angle spoke of Anne and Marlborough.

"Now for the bedrooms, Mr. Harvey," I said, in desperation. I proceeded to carry out Mrs. Masterman's suggestions. I danced on floors, I essayed the dangerous and giddy passes of the roof, at the risk of my life, I looked down chimneys. The best bedroom was pretty well, and looked out on the garden; but the smaller ones were detestably sordid: a small wooden partition dividing one from another, the windows looking straight down on some mean and dirty cottages.

Could I see the attics? Up we went again, up a set of rickety unfinished stairs, with the light showing through them. These opened at once without a landing into a large tent-shaped room under the tiles, with a sloping roof, glimpses of light here and there, and a chattering overhead of ruffling starlings and impudent sparrows. An airy room it certainly was, for a hardy maid-of-all-work; perhaps rather a rheumatic room; but that could be remembered in the wages.

Once more in the shop, and Mr. Harvey, cheerful and lively behind his counter, I put to him several bold questions not to be swerved from. I held him down (metaphorically speaking) as I asked him. I fixed him with my glistening eye, like the ancient mariner.

"Why was so good a house," I propounded, "to be let so cheap? Was the drainage bad, or was there anything special against it?"

"Not a wink," said Mr. Harvey, after looking very hard for a minute at a knot on the floor, and making a vain attempt to whistle a popular tune to show indifference both to me and any question I could or would ask. "Not a wink; only the best dining-room looked out to the garden instead of on the street."

"Oh, that, I said, I preferred. Nothing else?"

"No, not a wink, except that the rooms were rather low, and some people liked 'em high. Old Mrs. Goldweight lived there seventeen years and died there."

I took a measurement of the rooms and left. When I got to London and told my solicitor, he said, "What? Perdleton? Why, the lawyer there is an agent of mine. I'll write to him."

He wrote. The answer knocked me down.

"Perdleton is not a healthy place. There is always typhoid fever in the low grounds, and the people are not remarkable for either honesty or morality."

Instantly my vision of the place turned coal black. I pictured processions of hearsees up the long dull hill. I fancied that jovial wretch Harvey watching the doctor's daily visits at my door, until at last the blinds were drawn down slowly, and a low voice by my bedside said, "He is gone!"

But, in point of fact, Mrs. Masterman had long before sternly said, "Edward" (she had a way of tolling my name out), "Edward" (another tocsin), "I will never allow my child to be sacrificed in low rooms for the sake of a few paltry pounds."

Plangdon was the next place I visited. It is a market town in Berkshire, very accessible

from London—a large dirty place, with all the alleys and filth that it is possible to accumulate in a given number of centuries. A deep-sunken damp town, with pretty suburbs. I went to the chief house-agent's, opposite the market-place clock, and found a sporting sort of man nibbling a quill, and treating business in a contemptuous playful way.

"Were there any cottages near Plangdon to let?"

"John," said the sporting auctioneer to one of two giggling clerks, who seemed to be allowed to be impudent to every one but their master: "look and see what there is in the book. There's Laylock House, three hundred pounds; and Mrs. Bevan's place; and there's the Thompsons', fourteen bedrooms."

I cut the fellow in two at once. "What I want," I sternly remarked, "is a small cottage at about forty pounds a year, a mile from the station, small garden, five bedrooms."

This intelligence so disgusted the sporting auctioneer, that he looked at his gold hunting watch, lighted a cigar, and at once strolled into the town, leaving me to the two impertinent off-hand clerks and the great red insolent-looking reference-book.

"Yes. There was one small cottage, semi-detached, on the Maggleton-road, five bedrooms, small garden, fifty pound rent, had been ninety, but half the house was now cut off and turned into separate residence. Would I see it?"

This was really a nice place, "Havelock Villa," well built, plate-glass windows, good porch, good front door. The only drawback was, we could not get in. The workmen had gone. In vain we rattled the door, rang the bell, tried the windows, got on the back kitchen roof, looked down the chimney. No one being in the house, it was very natural that no one should answer. No one answered, and nothing could be done.

It would have required a stout heart to have daily splashed through that miserable rat-haunted town, threaded that vile suburb, and scrambled over rubbish-heaps, to that dark, unlighted, last street of Plangdon, to find one's wife and servants murdered, and the plate-box gone. Such a garden, too—a passage of rough turf, four lignum vitæ trees and a laurel.

Whish—h—h! Whish!

"Why, what's that?"

"That, zur?" said a native urchin. "That's the train to Manglebury."

I took a few steps and looked over the hedge. There was a deep railway cutting about twenty yards from the bedroom window. Trains all night. What a pleasant, retired, quiet residence; and Mrs. Masterman a bad sleeper too!

"Boy, what's the first train to London?" I exclaimed, indignantly, and shouldered my umbrella with fierce determination. I began to hate the petty miseries, the disappointed hope, the mirages, of house-hunting.

The only comfort I got from Mrs. Masterman was: "She could have told me at once that Plangdon would never do." Lizzy looked sorry.

My third pilgrimage was to a very different sort of place, Harrington. I got to that sombre Berkshire market-town, by a little branch railway from Brindleton. We ran down from the open country into a valley stretching downward to the Thames. The town consisted of four streets, of queer gable-ended pent-housed buildings, debouching in a market-place, the chief feature of which was the bow-window of a large inn. Beyond this the street ran straight to a huge pile of stone surrounded by acres of dim churchyard, thick set with head-stones.

The house was shown me by the parish clerk, for it belonged to the clergyman. The clerk was a small tradesman, stout, rubicund and smoothly respectable, deferential, and with a second-hand clerical manner, which was not exactly hypocritical, but looked rather like it. Again I saw the shuttered windows and dusty walls of a house to let; again the key opened a jarring and echoing tenement. A little quicker, and we should have come on revelling fairies or a sleeping Brownie. As it was, we saw nothing. It is hard to steal a march on fairies. The house had been a doctor's. There was not much to say against it at forty-five pounds a year. Good rooms—up and down, plenty of store-rooms, large cellar, great out-houses, disused coach-house, mouldy doors, detached wash-house; altogether, the place where a murder must have been, or certainly would be, committed; large dark yards, with one dim latticed-window looking on a paved court, every stone in it cracked across. The garden, a little damp enclosure, with gouty-jointed trees hung with cobwebs, was across the road, and open to every one who passed.

"That churchyard makes a very bad look-out, clerk," said I. "I should mope to death here."

"Sir, you know there's no burials now in the part opposite your windows."

"My windows? No. It won't do," I said, emphatically, to the bland clerk; "very dull, and no view. My compliments to Mr. Harker, say it's very nice, but doesn't quite suit me."

"Try Surrey, dear Ned," said Lizzie, on my return, as she stuck a lily of the valley in my button-hole, so constituting me her delighted and daring knight-errant for the day. "How cruel it is of me making my poor Ned take all this trouble!"

"Stuff and nonsense," said Mrs. Masterman. "What *can* be more important, my dear, than the choice of a house? It would not be too much if Edward spent six weeks looking for a desirable residence. I am not going to let you inexperienced young creatures put up with any avoidable inconveniences. Edward, try Surrey. What do you say to Crayton or Northgate?"

To Northgate I went. Curious old town, with an up and down street, and a fine old Elizabethan palace at one end, out of whose gateway one almost expected to see old Doctor Donne emerge, or excellent Mr. Evelyn. The High-street seemed to end in a green field at one end, and a rifle drill-shed at the other. A river ran across Northgate, fine wooded hills

girded it in. One old church lay broadside on to the quaint High-street, and another gloomed down on it from a side opening, like a fortress built to command it in times when the citizens were factious and turbulent. Facing this there was an inn with plate-glass windows and an air of snug comfort that made the beef and ale most palatable.

The house-agent was a little chirpy red-faced man with a great deal of white hair, and an after-dinner manner of such intense chuckling enjoyment at his own importance and success, that he seemed longing every moment to burst into a laugh. His wife, a pleasant neatly-dressed old lady, with flying lilac ribbons, stood at the office door, in equal good nature, and with equal importance and bustle.

"Not a house to be had in Northgate; great demand; people coming from Crayton and snapping up everything; ain't they, Mrs. Dawkins?"

"To be sure they are, Mr. Dawkins."

"And land dear, and not to be had. Is it, Mrs. Dawkins?"

"Not a rod, Mr. Dawkins."

"But I'll see. Why, isn't there that house on the Nortyton-road? Old lady died only on Monday last, and next day they sent here to tell me to put the house up to let. Didn't they, Mrs. Dawkins?"

"To be sure they did, Mr. Dawkins."

Then the jolly old couple looked at each other, and laughed and chirped at the very thought of an old lady dying on Monday, and they having to put "To Let" up in the window the day after. I did not see the joke.

The house was a little trim building, one of a row of six, with a little garden in front, and a low wall of pierced stone-work. The front windows commanded a view—pleasant? Well, not so varied as it might have been—a huge square flat field planted with cow-cabbages. The back windows stared on a small parallelogram of garden, now a heap of rubbish. There was a little mean front room, and there was a handsome but dull drawing-room, and five or six little bins of bedrooms, like those you find at sea-side lodging-houses. I left dissatisfied.

I had only Crayton to visit. When a man goes house-hunting he is apt to become superstitious, and to look around him for auguries and omens of success or failure. He tries to discover whether the place he is visiting is or is not to be the place which Providence has chosen for his next halting-place in life's march. He tries to get the place into focus, and to consider whether such an outlook, such a road at the back, such neighbours, such an aspect, are supportable or insupportable. He looks at the gate, to see if it be the sort of gate at which he would like to make his exits and his entrances. He poses himself in the dining-room, behind an imaginary rank and file of decanters, and speculates if he could be witty or comfortable there—or both—or either—or neither? I had tried those mental pictures at Northgate, and they had come out damaged photographs. I had still to try them at Crayton.

I shot down there one morning—hour and a half from Waterloo Bridge. Pretty station, rolling hills quite alive with the passing shadows of clouds and glimpses of glancing sunshine. Higher on a huge knoll, a big mansion, like Aladdin's palace modernised; and deep down in a valley among these hills behind, intersecting green waves of trees, the town, dotted white here and there with villas and mosaicked on its edges with bright green meadows, and red-dotted groups of cattle, and whiter specks, which are sheep, and long dark lines of Scotch firs, and broken banks of rice-coloured sand. The Surrey hills, then, do really exist? I had always thought they were imaginings of London lodging-house keepers.

The town one long street, with grey hills for its horizon. Its pavement, a high terrace on one side; a stationer (also a druggist), a haberdasher, several inns, a tobacconist, and wine-merchant, its most noticeable tenants. The house-agents, two gentlemanly young red-whiskered men exactly alike, and their father, a pleasant rosy old man of a bygone age, portly and courteous. They told me of a cottage on the Downton-road, towards Oxberry-hill—five bedrooms, rent forty-five pounds, gas laid on, good supply of water, nice small garden, good repair. Would I see it? Their clerk would get the keys and show it me.

Off I went, and with good omens; sky blue, day pleasant. Lizzy, perhaps here is to be our nest. My dear Mrs. Masterman, perhaps I may even yet appease you. About half a mile's walk led us to the borders of Crayton. Past builders' yards, past small suburban shops, past gardens seen through grated doors, past schools with noise and chatter oozing from every window, past half country roadside inns, with sign, trough, and outside benches, then up side-roads enumbered with rubbish, and heaps and piles of bricks, and preparations for building more raw new houses, such as those that already lined half the road. Then a pretty lane, and a corner cottage, gable ended, Swiss as to its wood-work, with a pretty projecting porch, and a little high green platform of lawn. I liked the place at once; so bright, snug, and cheerful.

The smart boy from the auctioneer's reasoned with the lock for a moment, then threw open the front door. Yes, all good. Pretty hall, two cheerful rooms, with gay but not vulgar papers, handsome marble mantelpieces, high square rooms with plenty of window. Yes, there my bookcase could stand, there my chair, there Lizzy's little fantasies and piano. Yes, it would do. The bedrooms, too, were good, and commanded fine views of the hills. Excellent cellar, neat bath-room, useful kitchen. Only one blotch on the paper in the drawing-room dimmed its white and gold. What was that blotch?

A slight stoppage in the roof; spout where the snow last January had lodged and worked in. That should be at once put right—in "perfect repair," was what the landlord, Mr. Mosser, promised, and he was a man of his word. I think it was the lawn, after all, that

decided me; for, as Mrs. Masterman observes, I am so unpractical a man. There was a charming view from the lawn; a park across the lane, on one side; before it, the town and the hills.

So I took the house, and proud I was when Mrs. Masterman consented to come to stay six weeks with us, and when I led Lizzy into the house on our return from our honeymoon tour in Switzerland. We have been at Crayton now two months, and we like it. The second day we were there, the baker's man informed our servant, to our great delight, that a nightingale every year built in the ivy of the second elm from the lamp at the corner of our road—the lamp, in fact, that glimmers over the corner of our lawn. We have since had reason to doubt the baker; still the information gave us pleasure for the time, and there was no reason to doubt it until experience proved the contrary. But our greatest triumph was on the day of our arrival, when we first saw four brawny grey horses emerge from a cloud of dust and advance up the sandy lane facing our house, straining every sinew, and dragging after them the huge van stored with our furniture. Then Lizzy and I felt that we were housekeepers, and were launched into life. And so we were; and moreover we had Mrs. Masterman in attendance, to guard us, as she observed, "from a thousand deceptions." The chief feature of Crayton, for the first week, seemed to be the perpetual whirling of tradesmen's light carts to and from our door, and the incessant calling of butchers and bakers for orders. But we hope to live through all this, having Mrs. Masterman to take care of us. I like to be taken care of, and so does Lizzy. But perhaps six weeks is rather a long while to be taken care of, at one time.

THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN."

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER XXIII. A REVELATION.

DURING these days it was noticed that Mr. Tilney took to visiting Mrs. Tillotson a good deal. Latterly, however, he had fallen into a habit of "dropping in" one night upon the captain, another night upon Mrs. Tillotson. With the captain, who always treated him as a guest of grandeur and his visit as an exceeding honour, he was welcomed with the familiar decanter of sherry. With Mrs. Tillotson the same ceremony was repeated; but with her he got into the habit of bemoaning himself in an arm-chair, with his face turned to the ceiling hopelessly. This dejection had reference chiefly to gathering money difficulties, and especially to what he called his "native home." "See me here," he said, "dishonoured, I may say, in my old age. I have no place to lay my grey hairs, that is, my head;" for he was conscious that the colour of his hair was brown. "They hunt me like a hare. They do indeed. The only thing I can compare it to is poor

what-d'ye-call-him, your father, whom they hunted to—By the way, where does Tillotson get *this*? Does he bottle himself?"

"My poor father," said she, sadly, "I begin now to look back to *him*. We turn back to those old friends again and again, though *that* was only a dream, and must ever remain so. It was God's will that I should be *so* young at that time."

"Only a dream, as you say, my dear, and far better it should stay so. Far better not, than have our pillow—yours and Tillotson's, I mean—full of thorns."

"O, what would I give," she said, with sudden eagerness, "to know the whole, no matter what pain or sorrow it brought with it. Latterly I have begun to turn back to that time, and something tells me I shall know all yet. In fact, I think I have got on the track."

Mr. Tilney started. "God bless me, don't, my dear child. Put it out of your head. There are good reasons why all these *old* things should be let to lie."

"I'll tell you," she said, stopping her work, and not heeding his expostulation. "I have been turning it over a great deal, and a thing has struck me. Promise me you will admit it."

"Nonsense, nonsense," said he, waving his hand half sadly.

"I suspect my husband has been told of it, and has been cautioned."

Mr. Tilney started. "No, no, my dear; put it out of your head. He knows no more than this—this glass of wine."

"But he does," said she, "and I'll tell you why. When we were travelling—now mark this—there was a little Italian town directly in our way on the coast—Spezia."

"Spezia!" said Mr. Tilney, looking at her amazed, and laying down his glass untasted—a sign of genuine astonishment. "Why, that's—How did you?"

"Ah! I know it," she went on. "We turned out of the road and avoided it. He wished to spare me. He has been cautioned."

"Upon my soul," said Mr. Tilney, looking round, "this is next to marvellous. Perhaps he does know something. Poor Dick Bateman knew everybody, and may have met *him*. Still we were all bound up, you know; and so you took a détour? How curious!"

"You know it all," she said, more excitedly. "If you could only imagine how it has taken hold, how it haunts me in dreams, how latterly a sort of unrest and craving has come upon me to have something to cling to in the weary hours that I have to pass through. Dearest father, as I always call you and have called you, do this one thing for me."

"Why not ask *him*, then?" said Mr. Tilney, in real trouble and agitation, flying for assistance to the comforting decanter beside him, "since he knows? though, indeed, my poor child, why should your little life be troubled, when an old wreck like me can give you a little comfort? After all, we are not to keep you a child *all* the days of your life; and really, now, we are so snug here, and so comfortable, that

I don't see why—There was a little money, as you know, my dear; and I, as you know, my dear, was clothed with a sort of trust. But I have been so run from post to pillar—so hunted about, like the commonest hare—that literally, my dear, I was *obliged*—"

She stopped him. "You must never talk of that, dear papa," she said, gently. "It was quite right; for it was all yours—*all*. Had you not been at the cost of taking care of *me* for so many years? Never speak of it; but tell me about these letters, and papa whom I never saw, but for whom I feel—O, such a yearning!"

Mr. Tilney was mellowed into an extraordinary power of melancholy retrospect.

"Dear me," he said, "I remember the whole so well, as if it were only last night, and yet it is how many years ago now?"

"And you saw him, and knew him?" she asked, eagerly. "I always thought that your goodness to me was a mere accident—that some friend—"

"Don't let us call it accident," said Mr. Tilney, lifting his eyes devotionally. "Nothing is accident—not even the sparrow on the housetop! In a certain sense, I did *not* know him—hardly. But indeed the time is ripe, my dear, when you should know something of this. Do you know, I feel a pang at having kept it from you so long. I was travelling at that time with poor Dick Bateman, now gone. Before that, indeed, he broke hopelessly—horse and foot; but at that time he was really as nice a fellow to know as you wish for. He was on the Dook's staff, too, and I picked him up at Venice, or some such place; so we agreed to travel home together. Same chaise, and that sort of thing. And, coming home, I recollect very well our stopping at one of those little Italian towns. Bateman, dear, was as fine-hearted and romantic a fellow as you'd ask to see. Well, we dined at the inn—a very fair dinner indeed, and uncommon good wine, and sat out in the garden drinking it; and while we sat there a gentlemanly looking man, a little decayed and broken up though, came out to one of the little tables and had his bottle of wine there. He had been a handsome fellow in his days, but was rather gone about the cheeks here, and he sat there taking his wine until it got towards ten o'clock. I think he was listening to us talking, for we were in high spirits. When, as we were getting up to go away, he came over and stopped Bateman, and, in good English, asked to speak to him for a moment. Now, if poor Dick had a horror of anything in this world, or in the next, it was of your gentlemanly seedy Englishman, so he drew himself up a little dryly. 'I used to know you,' said the Englishman—'I knew you well only a few years ago, Mr. Bateman, and you will know me when I tell you my name.' 'What,' said the other, starting back and recollecting him, 'You? Augustus Millwood? What is this? What does all this mean?'"

"And this," said Mrs. Tillotson, her soft eyes fixed on the story-teller, "this was—"

"Yes, my dear," said Mr. Tilney, now grown grave and rational, and really moderate in his applications to nature's kind restorer, "yes, it was indeed. A man I had often heard of—moving in the best—fine estate—money—everything; but run through it all. A common end, indeed. But Dicky Bateman was a true and noble fellow, and many's the time he's—He went aside with Millwood, and was away, I suppose, an hour, and then he came to my room just as I was turning in. He was full of excitement, my dear. I remember it all as if it was only last night. 'We must be ready to go on in the morning,' he said (we were to have stopped a couple of days), 'and I have ordered the chaise for six o'clock.' 'My goodness,' said I, 'I am dead beat. I thought we were to lie by here a little.' 'Well,' said he, 'the fact is, I have promised to see poor Millwood through—or Alvanly, as he calls himself here. Fact is, he has got into a row with a young Englishman, somehow, at the tables at Monaco, and they have come on here to settle it. He has been infamously treated—forced into it—and is as low as if he was going to be hung. I shall see him through, Tilney.' Then he told me a good deal about this poor Millwood, or Alvanly, as he was called there; that he had been treated cruelly on all sides, and that he had not a relation in the wide world to be kind to him or look after him; that his wife, for whom he had a deep affection, had died two or three years before, and with her death he had thrown off all restraint. But he had with him a little girl, only a couple of years old, whom he had been obliged to leave at home with a hired nurse, and her future was the thing pressing upon his mind. He told Dicky Bateman that he had just a couple of thousand left out of all his fortune, and that he was getting through that as speedily as he could, and so that perhaps this interruption was the best thing that could happen. I never saw any one so affected as poor Dicky was with the whole business, and he sat up half the night with his friend arranging everything, and promised him to look after the child, and take care of it, and he got me to promise also to help him. You, my dear, were that little child, at that time far away in England."

Mrs. Tillotson listened, with the devotional eyes bent upon the ground. Then she said, "Dearest father, why did you not tell me all this before?"

"Well, I must finish," said Mr. Tilney, hastily, "for, my dear child, you may guess what I am coming to, and, indeed, there is no use dwelling on it, for it has been hinted to you often before, dear. It was a very sad and cruel business. I was up the next morning, and we had the chaise ready, and I waited in it on the post-road with the trunks ready on, and the postboys in the saddle. I remember it was a lovely bright morning, and the sea was as blue as a turquoise brooch, and glistened like silver, and I was looking down at the coast, when I saw Dicky running to the chaise

for his bare life. He got in. 'Drive on,' said he, 'for your lives. Two crowns each more. My God,' said Dicky, throwing himself in, 'it's all over! What a thing to have on one's soul!' My dear," said Mr. Tilney, with unusual gentleness and a tenderness that had nothing to do with sherry, "now you see why it was as well I never went into this matter. It was no use. Now, now. Don't—don't go on so," added he, soothingly. "You know yourself you were only a child in arms at the time."

"But such a cruel, cruel end," sobbed Ada. "O, my poor, poor father! To think of his dying in that miserable duel."

There was a silence for a few moments. "It spoiled our tour," continued Mr. Tilney; "begad it did; for poor Dicky took it immensely to heart. We posted on as hard as we could go, and he told me the whole business as we went along. Poor Dicky, he felt it very much; for he said the others were savages, and were determined to have the man's life, and tried again and again. Then, when we got home, he made *you* out, my dear, and I must say looked after you like a father until he died, which was in a couple of years, and then I promised poor Dick Bateman, on his death, that I would take his place. And so I did, my dear. And there you have the whole story. And there, in your hands, are the last letters he wrote. And there, my dear, is the little picture. Now, now, don't—"

Ada was weeping convulsively. "My poor, poor father," she said. "And this was his wretched end, and I never to know all this time. Never to have an opportunity of praying God to execute justice on his murderers."

CHAPTER XXIV. A DISCOVERY.

At home that day there was, therefore, a deeper gloom and oppression. The wretched meal dragged through oppressively. Mr. Tillotson scarcely spoke, said he was unwell, and, when the dinner was over, went to his study. With a growing sadness, which was tinged with wonder and wounded pride, Mrs. Tillotson sat up-stairs alone.

Ever since the visit of Mr. Tilney, the strange story he had told her had been the subject of all her reveries, and distracted her from greater troubles. She could hardly bring herself to think over those dismal revelations, and yet in these solitary hours she found herself dwelling on them with a piteous retrospect and a strange yearning after the parent whom she had never known or seen, but whom every hour she was pining to have known. Often, too, she sat with a little packet of letters before her which Mr. Tilney had sent her, but which as yet she could not bring herself to read. For among them were those last letters of all written on that fatal night, and which she now shrank from. Often and often she had put off this duty, knowing what pain and sorrow it would bring her; and she every moment felt herself drawn nearer and nearer to it. One idea, however, began to take firm hold of her mind, and that was a sort of expiatory and filial pilgrimage

to the grave of her lost parent; and the more she thought of this, the more it soothed her. And finally she began to think over it with a soft pleasure and anticipation.

On this night, the letters were there before her, and at last, by a sort of uncontrollable impulse, she made up her mind to go through them. The very look of the first seemed to bring the little Italian town like a picture. She saw the cool evening after the sultry day, the retired garden and the strangers arriving in their chaise, and the poor outcast sitting there lonely by himself. The first she opened was a letter to herself: she kissed the faded characters. It was in a trembling hand. It ran:

"Rose of Italy.

"Time, three o'clock in the morning.

"I leave these few lines, which I hope my friend will take care of, and see that they be given to my little girl Ada when she grows up, and shall have come of age. I write knowing well that I am doomed; but I would wish that she should never know my miserable end until then, as I would not wish her sweet childhood to be troubled by any gloom. Tell her that her father died of fever, plague, anything. Any end will do for so unlucky and wretched a life as mine has been.

"At this moment, my dear sweet Ada, you are sleeping in your little cot, not thinking of what is coming on your wretched father. Perhaps it is all for the best, and I may as well end this way as another. If I was to live longer, I should only bring disgrace on you, my child, and rob you of the little fortune that is left. Thank God, I have not touched *that*, though it has cost me some hard struggles and temptations. It was a great agony to part with you, and if I had stayed by you, my sweet child, all this would never have happened. God, God bless you, if such a being as I am may invoke a blessing on so pure a creature."

Her tears fell fast as she read. There were others, one to his friend Bateman. It began:

"I feel I am a doomed man. That wicked truculent savage is determined to have my blood, and he has worked that youth up to fury. And yet as I sit here, for my last night, I declare to you, guilty as I have been all my life, I am innocent of this; I never spoke to that lady in my life. The truth is, I won some money from them at the tables, and the elder has been in a fury ever since. The young man is, I think, half mad with rage and jealousy, and they have followed me on here, hunting me like a dog or a hare. I confess to you I was anxious to avoid them, not from fear, as they imagine, but because I have a presentiment that as they were determined to have my blood, I knew they would succeed. I *did* fly in the night, and now they have overtaken me, and I feel my death-warrant. But O, Bateman, my poor sweet little girl. What is to become of *her*? I have not a friend in the world; they have all left me because they think I have disgraced them. And yet I have only been unfortunate. O, what

is to become of her, unless you, and after you other friends, look to her? *That* is what disturbs me in these last moments. Otherwise I should be resigned, and let those two bloodhounds have my life any way they pleased. I do not expect fair play, for I hear they have sworn to have my life, and they are welcome to it; for the youth fancies my death will be the best news he can take back and recommend himself.

"And now one more thing, Bateman. When the time comes for my sweet Ada knowing this miserable story, see that she learns the true state of things; let her not associate any vile history of disgrace and shame with her father's name. I here protest that all my life I have been more sinned against than sinning; that I have been the victim of enemies and of my own weakness; and that now in this last act I am helpless and powerless, and driven to what I cannot avoid. Heaven, I hope, will accept it as a little expiation for errors."

She wept long in silence over this paper. Then she turned to another which was in a different hand. This was dated from a Paris hotel, and after some months. It ran:

"In obedience to the wishes of my poor friend Millwood, I now set down here for his daughter to read, when she comes of age, what happened on that morning.

"I had learned from the innkeeper that he had arrived there much exhausted about noon of that day, and that about eight o'clock the same evening a chaise had come up with two gentlemen, who had followed him into the garden, where a dreadful scene had taken place. The two were very wild and excited, and one had even threatened to shoot him on the spot. I arrived myself shortly after, and was astonished to find an old friend in such a condition. Then he told me his position—that these two desperate men had entangled him in this quarrel about a Frenchwoman, whom he had scarcely spoken to in his life, whose advances, indeed, he had rejected, and who had set the younger of the two to avenge the slight.

"The two were literally, beside themselves with fury; the younger, in a sort of fever with rage and dissipation; the elder, from some old grudge about money against Millwood. They were disappointed at his finding a friend there, for I think they hoped to have had their victim all to themselves, with no one to interfere. But I took a very firm tone with them.

"At five in the morning they met on the seashore. I had great difficulties in keeping up the spirits of my friend, who continued saying that he was doomed. His last words were, 'Don't forget my poor little Ada;' and his last act was to hand me the enclosed letter for her. The two were very eager to begin, and it was agreed that they should throw for the first fire. We gained it. 'Courage,' I whispered to him; 'this is a great chance for us. On this depends everything, so be steady.' But his hand shook. 'I see my poor little girl,' he said,

as he took the tools, 'and I feel that I have behaved like a coward in abandoning her. Mind, mind,' he added, in a despairing whisper, '*mind*, I rely on you, Bateman.' The word was then given. He fired, and to my satisfaction I saw that his adversary was hit on the elbow. He gave a cry of rage. I stepped forward, and said that now the matter could not, or need not, go further. But the older man swore it should, and the young man, all bleeding as he was, stamped and said, unless I stood away, he would fire there and then. On that Millwood came himself, said he was ready, and, folding his arms, went back to his place, and waited calmly. 'Don't forget,' he said to me, 'I have but a moment more to live.' The young man, whose hand trembled with pain, now called out, and his friend said to him in a low voice, 'If you miss him now, by Heaven, I won't miss you.' 'Ah!' said the other, 'I have him;' and he fired. The ball struck him in the centre of the forehead, and Millwood fell like a stone."

The letter dropped from her fingers. For many minutes she sat there sobbing, and without venturing to pick it up, and finish the dismal story. It was, in fact, already finished. There was no more to read, and she sat with her heart turning towards that little Italian town where her unhappy father had met with such an end.

Suddenly a voice disturbed her. She raised her eyes, still filled with tears, and saw before her Mr. Tillotson, looking at her steadily, and with a letter in his hand. "Tears," he said. "What are you suffering from now? More oppression? Perhaps some of my work? I am sorry to disturb you," he went on, "but here is a letter just arrived for you. Heaven knows, I have no wish to be tyrannical, or to restrain you in any of your desires; but I have a duty to myself and to you. I have said again and again that I do not wish any communication with your friend, this Ross. I have even commanded this, so far as I have the power. You set me at defiance."

"I do not," she answered. "But what does all this mean? I am weary of it. I have no wish but what you wish. Why do you accuse me in this way? What is this change that has come over you?"

"No wish but what I wish?" he repeated, indignantly. "And you say that to me—you that make appointments with this man and his friends, and take his part against your husband. No wish but mine?" he repeated, bitterly. "No, no. At least, let us have no shams."

The colour came into her cheeks. "I grieve for this," she said. "I am sorry. I didn't think you would have stooped to set spies on me. I see you have lost all trust, love, and confidence in me. Well, perhaps it is for the best."

"I lost! No. Don't think that I am ignorant of what is going on, or of what has been going on. I am not the poor, soft, weak, plighted fool that I have been taken for; and I shall take care to show it yet. Perhaps I am changed; but who has changed me? What

has changed me? There, take your letter. Do as you please. Write to him. Defy your husband."

Suddenly she ran towards him. "Dearest husband," she said, "this is some delusion. Some wicked people have been filling your mind with these wild suspicions. Shut them out. Dismiss them. You know me. As for poor Ross, it is only for him I am anxious. We are only anxious that he should go away, and if we could see some opening—"

"I dare say," said Mr. Tillotson, sadly. "Nothing more suitable."

A sudden idea came to Mrs. Tillotson. "Or," she said, "you would not object to this. I see that you have taken up some strange ideas about me and my conduct, which no argument can dispel. It is useless reasoning. What if I went away? I want to travel. Then after a time—a few months—you would take a juster view of me and my conduct."

"And where would you wish to go, if I might ask?"

"I have thought of that, and settled it. I should like to go again to Italy—to that town on the coast which we passed by—Spezia."

He started back and turned pale. "To Spezia! What do you mean?"

"I may not tell you now," she said; "but I have good reasons. If you recollect, we avoided it on our travels. But it is a duty I have too long delayed."

"This to me!" he cried, sinking—"this from you!" "O Ada, then it is too true. Go, then. Carry out your schemes; ruin, disgrace us. I shall make no resistance." She thought he would have fallen from his chair, so ghastly did he look. But in a moment he rose, and rushed away from the room.

"What does all this mean?" she said, distractedly. "What is going to happen? O Heaven, look down on me! What are these dark insinuations? I seem to be in a dream. It is in vain to argue or resist. God help me!" She saw the old letters lying at her feet, and half mechanically she took them up, half mechanically she let her eyes fall on the part where she had left off. She read on:

"If ever there was murder done on this earth, it was by those two men. God forgive them! His blood is on their heads, and calls to Heaven for vengeance. Slowly and surely may it track them. If I am doing wrong, I am accountable; but there can be no sin in praying that earthly retribution may overtake that ruffian Eastwood—"

"Eastwood!" she almost shrieked; but she read on:

"—And his wicked companions in guilt."

Her faithful maid coming up that night had found her in a swoon. The household, who, with the instinct of households, knew pretty well what was going on of late, set this down as but a development of the new state of things—that "not getting on," which had arisen between master and missus; but it must have

gone very far indeed that night; and looking at the open letter in her hand, it was set down as being "all along" of that Ross.

After that night a yet deeper shadow settled on the Tillotson house. It seemed to others as though some deep blow had fallen on Mrs. Tillotson, which had crushed her, though they could guess what it was. But from that evening from Mr. Tillotson she seemed to shrink away with a sort of terror. He himself could hardly understand this change, for she now made no protest, and accepted all his wishes with a dreamy submission. Still, she did not forget that one purpose, which had come upon her in the night like a sort of inspiration, to get Ross away—anywhere; even implore of him to go. At the first opportunity she set out for the captain's residence

CHAPTER XXV. THE CAPTAIN HELPS.

As usual, the captain was overpowered with the honour of a visit from a lady. "Well, well; and give me the hand again. My God! And to be caught in this way. I'm ashamed of myself. Just like an old woman—nothing ready. See, my dear. Sit yourself down there—not on *that* one—it's got as bad a leg as myself. But I mean to make a job of it—a regular job, you know—some day next week. And did you walk here—now, now—you must—;" and the captain's fingers were on his little keys, and he was on the march towards the "guard-her-vine." There was a large official document before him, to which he saw her eyes wander. "Ah! There's what they've sent me now! They've found out I've been drawin' full allowances long enough, and want to get a little work out of me. It is a shame, and it makes me blush sometimes, when there's many a poor struggling fellow overrun with children—the creature who ought to have it, instead of a lazy, good-for-nothing bosthoyer like—However," said the captain, with some pride, "this is from the War Office—no less. They are going to put some of the Royal Veteran Battalion and the pensioners to garrison some of the little coast forts in Ireland. Gad, I remember them well. The martellos. I think," said the captain, with a sort of wistful doubt, "I could do something in that way. Guard-mounting once in a morning. Ah, but, after all, what can they do with an old foosterer like me, who can't stand straight on his two legs? Now, my dear, enough about old Tom and his concerns. How's Tillotson?"

Then, with much hesitation, she began to tell him what she had come for. The captain interrupted her at once.

"I see," he said. "The very thing. God bless me! What sense ladies have. They can buy and sell the whole of us. Now, give me the hand for that. I am really very much obliged to you for coming to me in this way; I am indeed. I'll just sit down this very day and make a pen, and write a line to General Cameron, my old friend—that's to say, when he was then Colonel Cameron—as fine a soldier as ever

stepped. He'll do it; and if he can't, we have other irons in the fire, dear. There's Colonel Wombell, at the Horse Guards. So make your mind easy, we'll take care of Master Ross." "Dearest captain, how kind, how good you are!"

"No. But I am obliged to you for coming to me. It's an obligation; and now let us leave that, or look on it as good as settled and done, and tell me how you go on yourself. I am afraid, do you know (you might mind, my dear, an old boy like me that could be your grandfather, and proud I'd be if I was!), but I have not an interest in you both, that you won't mind me, I know. Now, I declare it quite grieves me to see what's going on, you and he as nice a pair as ever was put together, and born to be happy; and if I could be the least use in the world, God knows I'd put these old eyes upon sticks to make things square." She hung down her head.

"It is no use. It is hopeless. Nothing could be done. He is possessed by some strange delusion about me, and besides, I myself—No, dearest captain, I see it is all quite hopeless. Nothing can be done. It must all go on as it has gone on."

"But surely, my dear," said the captain, wistfully, "a word in season might set all straight; and if I now—"

She shook her head. "It cannot be. You do not know all, nor dare I tell you all. I only want to see some end or issue of these scenes. But I suppose I must only bear all."

The captain wondered to hear this language. "I am an old Bolshero," said he, "and will be so till they come to measure me for the old chest. But I have known Tillotson so long and so well, I'd stake my salvation there's a mistake between ye of some kind. There is, I know. There never was a finer, or a better, or a nobler creature on the face of this earth. He likes you only too well, my dear, and trust an old boy who has seen a little life, it's all jealousy."

"It is not that," she said, hurriedly, and rising to go, "there is more than that—enough to make us wretched for the rest of our life. But we must try and bear our lot. As for you, dearest captain, how shall I ever thank you for this goodness?" And the golden-haired lady faded out of the room, leaving the captain in a litter of wonder.

With great form and ceremony he got out his great writing-desk bound with brass, opened it with equal ceremony, drew a special sheet of paper, and finally selected a quill pen, which he proceeded to "make;" then he got into his dressing-gown, and bending painfully down, with the "spectacles" on, began his despatch:

"My dear General," "My dear General," he had to repeat to himself a great many times over, in a sort of hearty, friendly way, as if the general was then sitting before him. "My dear General, I know you have not forgotten your old brother-officer, whose name is at foot, and his mess days of the old Fiftieth. I hope, my dear general, you are well and flourishing, and that everything is going straight with you. I have not forgotten

all your old kindness to me, and never shall, please God. You were always a true friend, and therefore I am ashamed to say what I am going to say, which is in the nature of begging; but the extremity of the case must be my sole excuse."

(The captain was greatly pleased with this turn, which he read over aloud several times. "The extremity of the case must be my sole excuse.")

"That will do uncommonly well," he said. "Now to the point."

"There is a young man, my dear general, whom we are all anxious to get out of the way here, for *particular reasons*; no man's enemy but his own, and disturbing the peace of domestic families."

(Again was the captain pleased with this new turn, and read it aloud—"Domestic families.") "We want to send him away for fear of dangers that may ensue. And if you, my dear general, have any little berth up the country that would suit a wild young fellow, but a fine soldier-like looking man, I cannot say how you would oblige your old friend, Tom Diamond."

After writing several copies of this document, and after many consultations of a little Johnson's Dictionary, but carefully and with a pardonable pride retaining that fortunate phrase, "the necessity of the case must be my *sole excuse*," a fair copy was at last produced, folded, sealed, and directed, with all formality, "His Excellency General the Right Hon. Sir George Cameron, K.C.B., K.H." and putting on his best frock, the captain went out to the military club to find out the proper address. To his surprise, he found that General Cameron was actually home on leave from his government, and would be in town in a few days. All letters were to be kept for him there.

"Look here, sir," said the gentleman who was framed in a window, and who was attracted by the captain's deference and simple manners, "here's lots of 'em already. The general lives here, I may say, when he's in town. He'll have this in his 'and the first thing, you may depend on it, sir."

With all this the shadows deepened slowly and surely in the Tillotson house. Every day the distance seemed to widen between the husband and wife. At times, he would see her eyes, those soft eyes, fixed on him with a strange dread that seemed to him like repugnance, and which he resented bitterly—with scorn. He brooded more and more over his wrongs, and set down this new phase of things as a defiance, with which she was determined to carry out her own views. Strange gusts of grief and passion swept over him, and which changed as suddenly into a fierce truculent manner, which she accepted with indifference or resignation. He was growing more and more indifferent to his bank and its concerns every day. He would absent himself for days; and when he came, would arrive late, and then start away suddenly, as if to keep an appoint-

ment. To say the truth, no protest was made against this behaviour. The great Lackson was taking a stranger interest in the concerns of the bank every day, and often told him, "My dear friend, you don't take half care of yourself. I don't like your looks at all. Don't mind working us. Spare yourself, and when you are well, then you'll do duty for us!"

Gradually, therefore, the great Lackson was becoming an influence in the bank. He had lost all his taciturnity, and, under his inspiration, its operations were beginning to show something like vitality, and getting out of the old "snail pace," or financial jog-trot.

One thing, and one thing alone, had possession of Mr. Tillotson's mind—a jealous, a mortally jealous watch on the proceedings of his wife. "If love is gone," he thought, "then I shall have respect, at least. That old dream is gone for ever. But he shall not profit by it."

And in these gloomy meditations he would sit for hours shut up in his study watching every step up-stairs. When the carriage came round, he would go up and ask to know where she was going; and she, with that look of shrinking from him and half averted, would tell him without concealment.

CHAPTER XXVI. AT THE MATINÉE.

In these days, about a week later, Mr. Tillotson was sitting in his room, when a ring came to the door. Presently he heard a voice in the hall, which his quick ear knew at once.

"Not in," it said—"Mrs. Tillotson not in! Don't tell me that at this hour of the day. Go up and tell her at once, and I'll sit in the drawing-room."

The servant repeated firmly that she was not in, and that he was sorry that he could not allow any one up-stairs.

"O, you have received instructions, have you?" said Ross. "You have got your orders. What if I wait in the hall here? I can do that if I choose. Supposing your mistress sent for me here this morning on business, eh? Come, I know as well as I am alive that she's up in her room. Don't tell me. And your master, pray? Gone to his bank, I hope. Is it he that has given these orders? It does not make so much difference. One place is as good as another to see a person. One house is as good as another. Well, tell your mistress, when she comes in, that she should make no appointments. I am not to be sent about from post to pillar in this way."

Thus this strange being rambled on in the hall. Mr. Tillotson listened in his study, and heard every word, biting his nails to the quick.

That day Mrs. Tillotson's carriage was at the door. As she was going out, the pale face of her husband appeared at the study door.

"Would you come in here a moment?" he said.

She obeyed, with the old shrinking and averted eyes.

"I shall not detain you," he said; "don't be afraid. I wish to speak about what I have

so often spoken to you before. I cannot have this going on, unless—unless you wish to turn me mad. I have said, again and again, Ross shall not come here, and that you are not to see him.”

“And do I see him?” she asked, coldly.

“Do you,” he repeated, “do you make appointments with him? No matter. That all must end now. Or if you choose to defy me openly, and do what you wish yourself, it would be more honourable and straightforward to tell me so plainly. Otherwise, it will be my duty to watch you—to have you watched narrowly—and see that my wishes are carried out.”

She coloured, and her eyes flashed.

“Since you have lost all confidence in me, I decline to say what I shall do. As you have announced that I am to be spied on, I scorn to justify myself. The whole is a mystery to me. I did indeed think that, after all, your old love, which endured so much, would have endured such a thing as this. But it is better we should understand each other, I feel myself innocent, and shall take no pains to satisfy unjust suspicions.”

She left the room, and entered her carriage, leaving him in a torrent of grief, wonder, and stupefaction. But in a moment he had roused himself.

“I accept what she proposes,” he said. “I have been a dupe once; she shall not find me one again. And after her cruel treachery, too!”

Mrs. Tillotson drove away. As she was passing through one of the quieter squares, she saw a walking-stick waving at her eagerly, and recognised Mr. Tilney, very bright and got up in a showy morning dress. She stopped, and he came to the window.

“So glad to have met you,” he said, leaning his arms on the window, with his stick soldier-wise across his chest as if it was a shield.

“So like a Providence, you know. But these things are all in the hollow of his hand—not a sparrow, you know. You must come, positively, and it’s a charity, too.”

“What is it, dear father?” she said, quite accustomed to this elliptical style of communication.

“Just close by here—two doors off, I may say. Amelia Bellman, quite a lady, only reduced to give lessons, I remember long ago at the palace, as nice a woman as you could pick out of the street—*any* street. A Miss Clifford—Ida Clifford—was just in the same—a charming thing, only it was broken up. When the Dook, you know—But I will come. A charity. She has taught the girls, and they are bringing young McKerchier and the others. Just take two tickets and drop in for half an hour. Do us a charity. A poor girl is quite desponding; for, to tell you the truth, the tickets have *not* gone off yet, and the rooms in advance before the doors opened; so, positively, unless we can put together our seven and sixpences, the whole thing will become very awkward indeed—for me, indeed.”

Mrs. Tillotson had her purse out in a moment. She never could refuse Mr. Tilney’s requests. Besides, she was fond of music. She opened the door and he got in. They drove aside of the square—round—and were set down at the concert-room’s door. A modest little placard, in red letters, announced “MISS AMELIA BELLMAN’S MATINÉE, under distinguished patronage.” But there was no crush. A few dropped in. Miss Bellman gave lessons to a few genteel people about Mr. Tilney’s neighbourhood, and indeed there was more gentility than skill in her teaching. Herbsthal, a fair London pianist, had promised to play a couple of pieces, and Miss Shulbrick, the well-known contralto, to sing. Still her little hall was a hopeless and desponding sight. The audience were so scattered it depressed the hearts of the pianist and contralto. The Tilneys had all come, and Mr. McKerchier, who yawned without concealment through the performance, and pronounced the whole thing “the greatest rot going;” though, at the same time, it is a fact that he did not discharge his little liability for the ticket, which fell upon the Tilney family. Miss Bellman’s papa, an ancient singing-master of repute, but long since turned out into a paddock, had put on harness again for his daughter’s benefit, and consented to give *The Death of Nelson*, after the declamatory model of the late Mr. Braham. This old gentleman accompanied himself, and turning his back on his piano, leaned over confidentially to the audience, to tell the story of the great naval engagement as if over the side of a vessel. Although it was very long, the scanty audience—out of pity and sympathy for the unhappy *beneficiaire*—stayed out the whole programme with surprising endurance. The pianist gave a couple of little “things” of his own.

The Grasshopper, Op. 6. . . . } Herbsthal.
Iceles }

Wonderful little bits of piano pantomime, where the trained ear could distinctly hear chirruping, and where, in the second piece, long sustained notes like a bell were intended to convey the idea of the cold “monotonous” icicle—and after this the audience rose to go.

It was late and had grown dark. Mrs. Tillotson had sat with her friends, listless and absent. This was not the music for *her*. Once, indeed, at Mr. Bellman’s blinking eyes, and face stretched away from his piano, as he told of England’s generous admission that every man on that day had done his “*dee-yewty*,” she could not forbear smiling. As the lamps were “turned down,” and Miss Shulbrick was singing the Children’s Grave, somewhere down towards her waist-buckle, Mrs. Tillotson, sinking back in her seat with a sigh of weariness, heard a whisper at her ear. There were several empty benches behind her, and a gentleman had just come in and placed himself close to her. She turned round with a start.

“Why do you persecute me in this way?” she said, agitated. “Go away, I entreat. You are bringing ruin and misery upon me.”

"This is a public concert," he said, coolly, "is it not? I have given my seven and sixpence to Miss Bellman. Bring ruin on you! no, not for worlds, Ada; not for my own life. Bring ruin on you—who shall do that? Who shall cause you a moment's trouble of mind? Tell me, and if any one dares——"

She grew alarmed, and looked round eagerly. The concert was now ending. It was raining, and the audience, at last released, hurried away. Ross came out with Mrs. Tillotson, still pouring his incoherent words into her ear. She was only thinking of how she could most speedily get to her carriage.

"Take my arm," said Ross, "d'ye hear? I'll see you to your carriage. What, are you afraid? I don't care who sees us. Come!"

They were nearly alone, as the company had all but gone. Suddenly a hand was laid on Ross's arm, and Mr. Tillotson's worn and weary face, with eyes that gleamed with a slow fire, was between them. He did not speak to Ross.

"You will come with me," he said to her; and with some roughness, at least with quickness, he drew her away.

His arm trembled. Ross's cheeks blazed up with fury.

"All this is the ruin and misery which you spoke of. This is our tyrant, it seems. For shame to treat—a lady—a girl—in that way! You set up to give lessons in chivalry and amiability."

"I don't wish to speak to you," said Mr. Tillotson, white as a sheet. "Do not come in my way, I warn you. Come!" he said, almost fiercely, to Mrs. Tillotson.

"Yes, let us go," she said, hurriedly.

"This is brutal," said Ross, stepping in front of them. "How dare you treat that gentle creature this way? I have a mind to give you a lesson here on this very spot. So this is your new game—tyranny over a helpless girl, who is now victimised to you for her life." Ross was working himself into a fury. "I tell you, let me once hear that you dare say a rude word to her, or give her a moment's trouble or discomfort, or attempt to play the tyrant, by (an oath) half an hour after, I'll come to the house and make you answer it!"

Mr. Tillotson's answer was a look of deep, hopeless reproach to his wife.

"This from you!" he said. Then turned to Ross. "This is too great an outrage. I have borne too much from you. But I give you one warning; if you attempt to interfere, by word or look, with me or any one belonging to me, if you dare to come near my house, or to address

a single word to her or to me again, as sure as I live you shall repent it—just as I made you repent it one night down at St. Alans!"

Mrs. Tillotson wrung her hands bitterly. "O, how is all this to end?" she cried.

Ross could not answer for a moment. He was half stupified. "Ah, you threaten me with that!" he cried. "Don't think it for a moment. I am your master; I have but to lift up my finger and I can make you tremble, and your miserable soul quake within you! I tell you again, I watch over her, and shall watch over and protect her against your tyranny. Listen, one whisper. Come here." And he drew Mr. Tillotson over to the wall. He put his hand up to cover his own mouth and whispered, then drew back with a smile of triumph. Mr. Tillotson shrunk from him with a start of terror; his pale face had become yet more ashy pale.

"Shall I?" repeated Ross, with a tone of triumph. "Shall I *now*? Now mind, you have had warning. Let me hear but of a single word to her, a look, a gesture, and I shan't spare you. Ah, ah, my friend Tillotson, that was an indiscreet allusion of yours to that St. Alans night. So mind, you have had fair warning. And, Ada, now you have a protector at last."

Neither husband nor wife, both crushed and overpowered, could say a word. The miserable Tillotson stood there against the wall.

The keeper of the rooms came now to warn them that it was time to "shut up." Ross was gone, and Mr. and Mrs. Tillotson went out mechanically to their carriage. He put her in. With a sudden impulse Ada, looking at his hopeless face, said almost despairingly, "Don't mind this, don't think of it; I do not mind him in the least, or his threats. I will explain all to you now. Come!"

But he shook his head, and with compressed lips said:

"No. It is all over *now*." Then shut the door and turned away.

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